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HISTORICAL SKETCHES
OF
STATESMEN
WHO FLOURISHED IN
THE TIME OF GEORGE III.,
TO WHICH ARE ADDED
REMARKS ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.
THIRD SERIES.
VOLUME I.

BY
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ACADEMY OF NAPLES.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE third series of this work is delivered to the public under a grateful sense of the favour with which the two former were received. It has been my desire to make some small return for such kindness, by redoubling my care to prevent any bias of a party or a personal kind from influencing the opinions pronounced, whether upon men or upon measures. Conscious as every one must feel how naturally our affections are engaged in behalf of those whose opinions agree with our own, and how apt the adversaries of those opinions are to be hardly dealt with in the judgments we form of them, I have most scrupulously made it my endeavour to treat all with whose history I have dealt as if I was ignorant of the principles which professedly guided their conduct, until I came to describe how far it was governed by them.

It has further been the constant object of these pages to record whatever tended to promote the great and united causes of public virtue, free institutions, and universal peace; holding up their friends to the veneration of mankind, their enemies to scorn and aversion; while the glare that success gives to bad actions, and the shade into which good ones are thrown by failure, have, as far as possible, been shown to be temporary only; and mankind

have been constantly warned to struggle against the prepossession thus raised by the event, and to mete out their praise or blame by the just measure of desert.

The first part of the volume now published relates to the French Revolution, and to the men who bore the foremost part in its most trying and interesting crisis. In giving this account I have enjoyed particular advantages, having the pleasure of knowing several worthy and intelligent men who bore a part in the transactions of those times. To one of these, my learned colleague in the National Institute, M. Lakanal, I was introduced by the kindness of my distinguished friend M. Mignet; and I have received from him many important communications. He was not a member of the Committee of Public Safety; but he belonged to the high popular party in the Convention, and he was at the head of the Committee of Public Instruction. He retains, at the advanced age of above fourscore, all the ardent zeal for human improvement and steady devotion to the cause of freedom which so eminently marked his early years.

The reader of these pages is further under obligations to my friend Earl Stanhope for a valuable note respecting Fouché.

BROUGHAM, *1st October*, 1843.

M. Lakanal died last spring. General Carnot, whom I also had the pleasure of knowing, died many years ago.

BROUGHAM, *11th September*, 1845.

STATESMEN

OF THE

TIME OF GEORGE III.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

IT is impossible to understand the reign of terror which in France succeeded the overthrow of the monarchy, or to form a just idea of the too-celebrated individuals whose names are inseparably attached to the history of that dismal period, without examining the origin of the Revolution, marking the position in which it both found and placed the country, and tracing the steps of its progress from the first commotions that shook the ancient establishment, to the shock that consummated the destruction of the political system, and for a season appeared to threaten the ruin of society itself.

A controversy at one time prevailed upon the share which philosophers, and literary men generally, had in bringing about the great changes now under our consideration. They who raised this question really meant to discuss the influence

which had been exerted by the general diffusion of knowledge and improvement of the people, in creating a desire for more ample privileges and for a better system of government. For, although some few reasoners had contended that there was a sect of free-thinking men both disbelieving the religion and disapproving the political institutions of the State, leagued together in a kind of conspiracy to overthrow both, for the purpose of emancipating their species from all the ancient control under which they had so long been living, yet no one, who seriously reflected upon the disparity between the means and the end in the structure of this supposed scheme, could believe that any such plot had a chance of success, unless in so far as its authors might aid the general progress of mental improvement, which no one could deny was everywhere to be traced. Thus the Abbé Barruel and Professor Robison, who were the principal advocates of the doctrine, had not many followers ; while a much more considerable body of reasoners maintained, not merely that the revolutionary spirit which had broken out in France, and was with difficulty repressed in other countries, had no connexion with any plot or the machinations of any sect, but that the whole convulsion which shook all Europe to its centre was the result of comparatively trivial and accidental circumstances.

This opinion was maintained with greater force

of argument and with more weight of authority, by M. Mounier, formerly President of the National Assembly, and distinguished by his talents, his virtues, and his patriotism, than by the bulk of ordinary writers and speakers. He had distinguished himself by the moderation of his liberal opinions when a member of the States-General; he had filled the chair of the assembly with great credit; and he had quitted France when the profligate and cruel councils of the violent party began to prevail. No man was better entitled to be heard upon the causes of a Revolution in which he had borne so honourable a part; and as his political opinions alike rejected the extremes of either side, dissenting as much from those who resisted all change as from those whom no change would satisfy, he seemed as safe a guide to the truth of the case as could well be selected from the host of reasoners whom the controversy called forth.

M. Mounier denied altogether the share ascribed to lodges of freemasons and chapters of *Illuminati* in producing the revolutionary movement; he rejected entirely the notions of those who traced to such actual conspiracies any portion of that great event; and had he stopped here, no one could have questioned the soundness of his views. Indeed he was enabled, from his personal knowledge of the actors in the French States-General and National Assembly, to refute the specific statements of fact

upon which the speculations of the Abbé Barruel and his followers reposed. Thus, to take a single example, the machinations which were asserted to have been practised upon M. Camille Jourdan (a worthy person of extremely insignificant talents and no influence), and to have gained him over to the revolutionary party, could not by possibility have been so used, inasmuch as that gentleman assured M. Mounier that he had never in his life seen or communicated with a single individual of those confidently named by the Abbé as his seducers, or with any other persons of the same class.

But M. Mounier did not content himself with excluding the lodges and the chapters of secret associations ; he was equally confident in his exclusion of the philosophers and their writings. Not only, according to him, had the direct attempts by plot and conspiracy no hand in undermining the old French Government, but the indirect and gradual influence of infidel opinions, and revolutionary doctrines propagated through the press, the encyclopædias, the dissertations, the romances, the correspondence, the poems, the epigrams—all the heavy and all the light artillery of the band so formidable by its numbers, its learning, its genius, and its wit, so indefatigable in its exertions against the established order of things, so incessant in its efforts to undermine all prejudices, to strip all established institutions of the respect with which time

and feeling and associations had clothed them, so zealous in converting mankind from settled faith in holy things, in rousing them against abuses as well in the State as the Church, in declaring the natural rights of men, in painting their wrongs, in displaying the merits of the people, and denouncing the crimes of priests and princes—all the teaching of the D'Alemberts, the Condorcets, the sneerings of the Voltaires, the eloquence of the Rousseaus, the fancy of the Diderots, the social powers of the Holbachs and the Grimms—all were without influence in preparing the great change; and the press, which over Paris and over France had for a century been working with the corruptions of the Court and the Church and the sufferings of the people, and had taken its whole tone from the writings of those great men, and the circles of fashion which everywhere concentrated and reflected the lights thus shed abroad—were all, according to M. Mounier, wholly foreign to the purpose, wholly unconcerned in bringing about a change that took precisely the direction to which all those efforts pointed; in overthrowing a system of ecclesiastical and political government, against which all those blows had been aimed; in producing a general movement of that people, to excite whom in this very manner and to this very movement all those various exertions had so evidently been made. It should seem that those who held such opinions as

these were prepared to believe, on seeing a battery erected against a town, and bearing its fire upon the walls for weeks, that the breach which was made had not been caused by bullets, but by an accidental earthquake. According to M. Mounier and his followers, the whole mystery of the Revolution was contained in the accidental derangement of the Finances, the convocation of the States-General, and the vacillating conduct of the Court and the Ministers in first suffering the Commons—the *tiers état*—to have a double number of representatives, and afterwards allowing the three orders to join in their deliberations, sitting in the same hall. Had it not been, they contended, for the recent addition of nearly fifty millions to the debt, while the revenue was insufficient to defray the public expenditure and pay the interest owing to the public creditor, had not the King agreed to call the States when no means of obtaining the needful supplies could be devised; nay, after they were called, had not an undue proportion of deputies been granted to the Commons, and the majority thus created been permitted to act on the whole body by joint voting,—the whole storm would have passed away, and the ancient establishments have continued to guide the religion and rule the fortunes of the country.

On the opposite side of the question there appeared one of the most remarkable pieces that ever

adorned the periodical literature of any country. Mr. Jeffrey began his labours in the 'Edinburgh Review,' and laid the foundation of that celebrated journal's fame by a paper, in which he examined and refuted M. Mounier's doctrine—a paper of which it would be hard to determine whether the inexhaustible imagery of its illustrations, the profound wisdom of its opinions, or the felicitous diction of its style, most deserves our admiration. This eminent person and those who agree with him are far from denying that the deranged finances of the country, and the imbecility of the Government, had a share in accelerating the Revolution and in directing its course. A yearly expenditure of sixteen millions, with a revenue of less than nineteen, leaving not three to pay the interest and charges on the debt of between ten and eleven millions annually, formed such dreadful embarrassment as might well shake any established system, how wisely and how vigorously soever it was administered. But it is certain that greater disorder has prevailed in the revenue of other States, and has been got over by the rough, though vigorous, expedients which arbitrary power has at command, without even shaking the stability of the national institutions. Nor could all the errors of the Neckers, the Briennes, the Maurepas, the Calonnes, have dislocated any portion of a system which had not been prepared to crumble in pieces by the ravages of time, or the undermining of the public opinion. or

the ferment of popular discontent, and the universal prevalence of a love of change.

M. Mounier was correctly and beautifully described in the paper referred to as having given for the causes of the Revolution, circumstances which really proved it to be already begun ; as having gone no further back than to the earliest of its apparent effects, instead of tracing its hidden sources ; as having mistaken the cataracts that broke the stream for the fountains from which it rose ; and contented himself with referring the fruit to the blossom, without taking any account of the germination of the seed, or the underground winding of the root.*

It is certain that, though the financial derangement powerfully aided the preachers of revolt, and though their efforts were not met by any adequate vigour on the part of those who administered the power of the government, yet these were far enough from being the cause of the Revolution. The apostles of change found more powerful coadjutors and more active and ample elements of mischief in the great abuses which prevailed both in the Ecclesiastical and the Civil institutions of the country. A church endowed with above five millions of revenue from tithes alone, and with nearly half the land in the kingdom, assigned only a wretched pittance of twenty pounds a-year to the parochial or working clergy, while all the rest was a prey to the vices of

* Edinburgh Review, vol. i. p. 7.

a luxurious, an idle, and a dissolute hierarchy. The landed property of the country was so unequally divided that one-third of it alone was in the hands of the lay commonalty, the church and the nobles possessing all the rest. The taxes were so unequally distributed that the largest of them all (the *Taille*), yielding between seven and eight millions, fell wholly upon the peasantry, neither church nor nobles paying a farthing towards it; and it was calculated that if an acre of land afforded three guineas of gross produce, nearly two went to the revenue, eighteen shillings to the landlord, and a crown only remained to the cultivator. In England Mr. A. Young used to reckon that the cultivator enjoyed three-fourths of the produce, while in France he had but a twelfth part; placing him in a situation nine times less advantageous. The grievances arising from the feudal system, and which were felt far more severely in France than in any other feudal kingdom, completed the distress of the people, affecting them both in their subsistence, in their comforts, and in their pride. Nor can it be doubted that, upon a high-spirited people like the French, with minds peculiarly susceptible of affront, the mental degradation which these feudal distinctions inflicted was more galling than any actual suffering which in their material comforts they had to endure. It is highly probable that the peasant felt more vexed

at seeing the lord's pigeons trespassing on his crops, without the power of destroying them, knowing that the lord might not possess an acre of land,* than he did from paying a tithe of that crop to the church and a third to the landlord; and the statute labour (*corvée*) which he always had to perform must have harassed him incalculably more than a much heavier burthen shared with the feudal lord. Accordingly, of all the changes effected by the Revolution, there was none which went more home to every Frenchman's bosom than the famous decree sweeping away feudal privileges. The vote of the Assembly on the 4th of August diffused joy over all France, such as perhaps no other act of legislative power ever excited. It may be said, without a figure of speech, to have raised one universal shout of exultation through the whole expanse of that vast and populous country. The language applied by Mr. Burke to the memorable proceedings of that night, and which termed it the "St. Bartholomew of the privileged orders," was employed by but a very few, and did not express the sentiments prevailing even among the members of those orders themselves, from whom indeed the proposition mainly had proceeded.

* The *droit de Colombier* was wholly dependent on the seignory, and might belong to a lord who had no property in land: the actual owner had it only in a very limited extent.—*Political Philosophy*, part 1, chap. xiii.

Just half a century after these events I happened to be travelling in a remote district of Provence, when, reposing in the heat of the day under a porch, my eye was attracted by some placards, whose letters were preserved by the great dryness of that fine climate, though they had been there for fifty years. Those papers were the official promulgation of the several decrees for secularizing the clergy, abolishing the monastic orders, and abrogating all feudal privileges, signed by the several Presidents of the Assembly, Bureau de Pusey,* Camus, and Siéyes. The incident is exceedingly trivial in itself; but I shall not easily forget its effect in carrying me back to the great scenes of the Revolution, ere yet its path had been stained with blood, while virtuous men might honestly exult in its success, and the friends of their species could venture to hope for the unsullied triumphs of the sacred warfare waged with long-established abuses. The past seemed connected with the present, and the mighty consequences visible all around which had flowed from the changes recorded in those few lines, appeared to rise, as it were, before the sight, springing out of their causes. Nor must it be forgotten that the perils of the tempest having happily passed away, the atmosphere which it had cleared was breathed in a pleasing reflection that the region over which its fury had swept was now flourishing in unprecedented prosperity, for which the price paid had as-

* Afterwards confined at Olmutz with Lafayette.

surely been heavy, but not too heavy compared with the blessings it had purchased.

Hitherto we have only considered the proceedings of the National Assembly itself; but that memorable body was not the only organ of public opinion and popular feeling, nor were its deliberations entirely free and uncontrolled. As soon as parties began to form themselves within its circle, appeals to the people out of doors were the natural consequence, each seeking to gain the weight arising in revolutionary times from popular support. At first, with the exception of one or two scenes of dreadfully excited popular fury, the press alone was the channel through which the party leaders sought to influence public opinion. The religious feelings of the people were next appealed to; but the tendency of the clergy to support the ancient institutions, and the course of hostility to the Church so early pursued by almost all parties in the Assembly, soon brought such feeble and round-about appeals to a close; and a more summary and effectual mode of agitating was discovered. Clubs were formed, at which men not belonging to the Assembly, as well as deputies, met to discuss the topics of the day, and especially the proceedings of their representatives. These meetings were at first private and not numerous; soon they became better attended, and were much frequented by the deputies themselves; then their doors were flung open to the people. The earliest association of this

kind was formed by the deputies from Brittany. When the National Assembly was removed from Versailles to the capital, the club, becoming more numerous, held its meetings at the Jacobin Convent in the Rue St. Honoré, and admitted as members many persons not belonging to the National Assembly. Perceiving that its influence upon the Assembly was considerable, the Club now endeavoured to rule the municipality or Town-Council of Paris, a body always possessed of great influence from the large revenues at its disposal, and the great number of persons in its constant employ for the management of those revenues, as well as of the Metropolitan Police. The Jacobin Club, as it was now termed, extended its influence to the provinces, and formed everywhere affiliated societies or clubs which corresponded with it, took their tone from its debates, and exercised in each town an influence like its own.

Dissension, however, broke out in the mother society itself. The more moderate men, with Lafayette and Siéyes at their head, retired to form an association of their own, which they termed the Club of '89, while Lameth and Barnave directed the proceedings of the Jacobins. The new Club chiefly influenced the Assembly; the Jacobins always made their appeal to the people. The Royalist party soon attempted a similar policy, first forming a Club called the "*Impartiaux*," which had no success; then one termed the "*Monarchique*,"

which was so much better attended that it excited the jealousy of the Parisian mob, gave rise to tumults, and was shut up at the beginning of the year 1791 on that account by the police, which thought it just and reasonable to punish the party assailed, because those who attacked it had been guilty of some violence.

The Jacobins now underwent another change ; the Lameths and Barnaves, unwilling to push matters to extremity, formed a new club, called the "*Feuillans*," from the convent at which they met ; and the direction of the Jacobins fell into the hands of Pétion and of Robespierre. But there were some who deemed these men and their followers not sufficiently favourable to extreme courses. Danton, Camille Desmoulins, and Fabre d'Eglantine seceded to form a more violent club, which met at the Convent of the *Vieux Cordeliers*, and took from thence their name. Among these different clubs, the Jacobins exercised the greatest influence both over the Assembly, the municipality, and the people at large ; but all of them, by their unceasing agitation, kept the people in a constant ferment of disquiet ; all of them, by their overbearing conduct, kept the deliberations of the Assembly under a control as indecent as it was pernicious ; all of them prepared the materials of a combustible train, which a spark might at any time fire into a general explosion. Unhappily the Assembly did not present from the first a firm and determined aspect of re-

sistance, so as to secure for itself the unbiassed freedom of discussion and of decision. But the first Assembly had far less to suffer from the interruption of the multitude than the second and the Convention afterwards had to endure.

It was to be remarked that the total number of those who frequented and composed the clubs was really far from being formidable. Thus 1500 was the whole body which usually composed the Jacobin meetings—a number quite inefficient to overcome either the constituted authorities of the capital, or the mass of its inhabitants, though truly formidable as a band of active agitators; for it must be remembered that all those men were demagogues and intriguers—men heated with enthusiasm, or agitated by the love of change, or prompted by mere desire of mischief; and as for their debates, the meetings were far too numerous for anything like discussion; so that when they made the proceedings of the legislature the subject of their deliberation every night as soon as the Assembly had adjourned, nothing could be heard but violent invective against some members, and exaggerated praise of others, ending in a resolution, carried by acclamation of the assembled mob, to excite some tumult among the multitude, in order either to further or to obstruct the course of the national councils. The more sober-minded and respectable classes of the community held aloof from all such

proceedings. The great majority of the tradespeople, the shopkeepers, the artisans, even the bettermost labourers, and almost all the proprietors, or persons of fixed means, took no part in what was going on, but regarded the acts of the legislature with interest, and the violence of the clubs with silent dread; while the mere rabble, which had nothing to lose, and never reflected on questions which they were too ignorant to understand, were—either from love of confusion and its sister, plunder, or from the mere heat of uninformed but easily excited fancy and feeling—the ready tools of the clubmen, as often as a demonstration of mob force was wanted, in order to overawe the Government, or to determine the conduct of individuals. It became thus clear that a small minority was enabled to rule the multitude, and influence the people of the capital. A similar force was exerted by the provincial clubs upon the people of the towns; and the influence exerted on the deliberations of the Assembly was the power of a small but active body, who had thrown off all regard to order or moderation, and who were devoted to whatever most worked for great changes, with an audacity to which fear was as much a stranger as principle, or prudence, or discretion.

When the National Assembly had destroyed the greater evils of which the people complained, and had formed a constitution upon the principles of

a mixed or limited monarchy, they voluntarily stripped themselves of their functions, abdicated their power, and resigned into the hands of the people the high trust which had been delegated to them. Such a course was quite fitting, and indeed was the inevitable consequence of a new constitution being established. But there was coupled with the dissolution of the Assembly a provision unexampled in the history of human folly, and which nevertheless was adopted almost without discussion, and by general acclamation. It was declared that no one of the members of the first Assembly should be capable of being elected to the second; and the consequence was, that every man of weight and experience, all those whose capacity and integrity had most recommended them to the confidence of their fellow citizens, whose trust-worthiness had been brought to the test of experience, and whose opinions had become known to the world, were excluded from the body which was called to work the new Constitution, and to make a code of municipal laws for France. Unknown, inexperienced, untried men were alone suffered to execute the most important functions that mortals can perform, and in circumstances of the greatest difficulty. The result answered to the expectations which all reasonable men had formed. The conduct of the legislative body was that of an inexperienced multitude, wholly under the control of the most

violent parties out of doors, unable to maintain its own independence, and incapable even of preserving the decorous appearance of a senate in its own hall, as often as the mob rushed into its presence.

But the bad constitution of the new Assembly was produced not more by the absurd rule excluding all the former members, than by the other means which the authors of that rule used to fill it with the creatures of their faction. The clubs, especially the more powerful one of the Jacobins, were the instigators of Robespierre's motion for the exclusion; and they assured themselves that its result would be to throw into their hands the whole elections of the new legislature. Accordingly they pursued a course of agitation and canvass with the unceasing activity which is only known to popular bodies, with the boldness which even they only possess in the troublous times of revolutionary excitement, and with a perseverance unusual to popular bodies even in those times. The mother club of Paris disposed of all the elections there,*

* It must be confessed that frequently the French people displayed in their elections a regard for their principles, and a sense of gratitude towards public benefactors, which we in vain look for among the people of our own country. No man of any eminence in the two first Assemblies was excluded from a seat in the Convention or Council of Five Hundred; and if any one lost his election in the places of his own department, some other was sure to choose him. To Carnôt the extraordinary honour was paid of no less than fourteen places returning him to the Council of Five

and the affiliated societies in the departments exercised equal sway over the provincial returns. The influence of the clubs therefore, but especially of the Jacobin Club, was prodigiously augmented by the general election ; and over the new Assembly they exercised an almost unlimited control. In proportion to the obscurity and insignificance of the newly-elected deputies was the importance of those who had obtained the whole confidence of the country by their great exploits in the former Assembly. That weight must have been constantly felt to bias the deliberations of their unknown and nameless successors, even had no means been provided of bringing it to bear directly and substantially upon the proceedings of the legislative body ; but the clubs, in which the known leaders, members of the former Assembly, continued to debate all questions before the people, and with the greatest publicity, seconded by the press, rendered their influence altogether irresistible. If Robespierre, in proposing their exclusion from the new Assembly, had no other design than the avowed object of ex-Hundred. In England, let the man who has rendered the most valuable services in Parliament, and shown himself the best qualified to discharge the important duties of a representative, lose his seat by any accident, and, for want of funds and of aristocratic support, he may reckon on being left out altogether. No other place feels a call to return him, as constant experience has shown, to the extreme discredit of the English character.

tending the popular power, and purifying the legislature from all personal and party taint, nothing can be considered more absurd than the scheme ; but if his plan was to make the new Assembly the mere instrument of a few men who had borne sway in the old, and to place the whole powers of the state in the hands of a few agitators, acting through the mob of Paris, the project must be allowed on all hands to have been wisely and warily conceived, and certainly its success was complete.

Fully to perceive the obscurity of the men into whose hands the legislative power was now nominally committed, we have only to look at the official reports of the debates during the month of October, 1791, when the new Assembly met. Forty-three members spoke in the second meeting : of these the names of sixteen only are given ; the remaining twenty-seven are in blank, the reporters having been utterly unable to name them ; they are all called Monsieur In the third sitting twenty-seven spoke, and twenty are recorded anonymously. The temper of the body, moved entirely by the Jacobin Club, may be ascertained with almost equal accuracy from the proceedings which first were taken. The titles of *Sire* and *Your Majesty* were refused to the King, the first magistrate under the constitution which they had just sworn to uphold ; and a seat was allotted to him in the Chamber of the size, form, and elevation

of the President's ! The childish nature of these measures, while it conveyed a notion of the petty minds that were ruling France, could not conceal from the eye of the observer the evil spirit which guided their deliberations.

The power of the clubs, and especially of the Jacobins, now rose in proportion to the obscurity and insignificance of the men thus unknown who led the deliberations of the Assembly. But it was not by merely holding their nightly meetings, and giving vent to the most violent sentiments in their inflammatory harangues, that the Jacobins obtained so uncontrollable an influence. Those meetings, no doubt, of themselves were sufficient to bring into complete discredit the proceedings of the Assembly, because they were attended by the ablest and most popular men in public life, and their debates naturally excited far more interest than those of the obscure Assembly. In this country the Parliament has always found it necessary, for the maintenance of its own superiority and importance, possibly for preserving its existence, to put down with a strong hand every rival body. Accordingly, in 1817, when the convention was assembled, of delegates to sit in London, discussing public measures, and about to publish reports of their debates, the Parliament passed an Act declaring such a meeting unlawful, as had been done formerly by the Irish Parliament, and since the Union by the

British Parliament, with respect to Ireland. The ground of the apprehensions which led to these measures was the consciousness that, independent of the direct authority of the legislature derived from its actual power, its weight with the people depends, at least in modern times, upon its debates ; and that a greater portion of that weight than it could afford to lose would inevitably be transferred to the rival body. In Paris the Assembly was weakened, and all but suspended, by the operation of the same causes in the proceedings of the Jacobin Club ; but though these might, in the end, have proved destructive to the Assembly, the Jacobins were not content to await the result of so slow a process of discredit. They determined on keeping alive the direct authority of the Assembly, and using it as their instrument. They assumed, therefore, the tone of superiority, and used the language of dictation. Their resolutions were communicated by deputations at the Assembly's bar ; but they had recourse to other measures for the purpose of giving weight to their representations, and over-awing at once the executive and the legislative functions of the state. The municipality of Paris was under the control of the club ; and the mob, chiefly through that body, whose funds were large, and whose servants were very numerous, was so completely at the club's disposal that it could, upon any occasion, bring into the field a force of

thousands, among whom were many desperate men, ready at all times for every extremity of sanguinary violence. The greatest outrages were indeed, at first, not committed in the capital, but by the affiliated societies, chiefly in the south of France. Alarming disturbances broke out, particularly at Nismes, where the Catholics and Protestants came into collision, exasperating by their religious fanaticism the violence of political faction ; and a great number of lives were sacrificed to the fury of the contending parties. The amount of this slaughter is differently stated, but no account reduces it below several hundreds ; and the Assembly, acting under the control of the mother club, did not bring to punishment some atrocious miscreants whose cannibal ferocity had been proved before it, but suffered them, after a slight examination, to return and renew the same horrors upon the scene of their former crimes.

It appears, from various unsuspected sources of information, that the leaders of the extreme parties were fully sensible of their having only an inconsiderable numerical force compared with those who adhered either to the ancient order of things, or the new and mixed constitution. The republican party formed a very inconsiderable minority everywhere, though in Paris they had a following among the literary and scientific classes, and among the lower orders, ever ready for change, and prone to

fancy that all confusion must benefit them. But the party of the Gironde, the earliest to declare for a republic, were all along conscious of their weakness in point of numerical strength, and felt the necessity of overawing the majority by strong demonstrations of physical force. Even after this had produced its effect in silencing opposition, and attracting that portion of the multitude which in civil broils is always ready to side with the more powerful party, we find the Republican leaders confessing with bitterness of spirit that they had but a small proportion of the people with them. After the overthrow of monarchy, it was a saying of Barrère, “Il y a une République—il n’y a pas de républicains.”—One of the Gironde (Saulavie) boasted that his party “had defeated the wishes of the country on the 10th August with three thousand workmen.”—When Pétion was declaring that there were but five Republicans in all France, Collot d’Herbois and Merlin de Thionville, in an altercation with him, exclaimed, “Nous avons fait le dix d’Août sans vous, et nous allons faire la République contre vous.”—As late as July 3, 1791, we find Merlin de Douai speaking of the abolition of royalty with horror as meaning “a frightful civil war,” and arguing on the utter impossibility of forming a republic in an extensive country. (*Mém. de Lafayette*, iii. 383.)—Danton, in his address to the Council of Ministers upon the mea-

sures to be taken for the defence of the country after the allies had taken Longwy, and were cannonading Verdun (31st August, 1792), used these remarkable expressions; “Vous ne pouvez pas vous dissimuler l’extrême minorité dans l’état du parti qui veut la république.” (You cannot conceal from yourselves the very insignificant minority of the party in the country which is for a republic.)—His inference from thence was, that terror alone would gain the day. “Il faut faire peur aux Royalistes. Effrayez les !”—On the eve of the too-memorable days of September, he followed up this counsel with these ever-to-be-remembered words: “Pour vaincre, que faut-il ? De l’audace ! Encore de l’audace ! et toujours de l’audace !—et la France est sauvée.”*

Upon this principle the Jacobins and other leaders of the extreme party faithfully acted. The Gironde, composed chiefly of deputies from that district, and thence deriving their name, were men of respectable character, averse for the most part to violent proceedings, much connected with the press, of a speculative and literary cast, disliking, even despising, all popular associations, but of a blind fanaticism in favour of their own political opinions. At first they are supposed not to have favoured

* For what reason I know not, the most remarkable words, “*et la France est sauvée,*” are left out by most authors. The debate in the ‘*Moniteur*’ gives them as in the text.

republican courses, chiefly from their unpopular tastes and habits. But, whether from finding themselves without any support with any portion of the community if they maintained their merely constitutional doctrines, or from the natural tendency of those doctrines when embraced with fanatical zeal to merge in republicanism, certain it is that they soon became the chief patrons of those extreme views which sought the destruction of royalty; and though disinclined to all excesses, were fain to call for so much violence as might silence their adversaries, giving the minority that power through terror which they wanted by the force of reason, or on the balance of numbers. Accordingly they actively joined in a very indecent attack both upon the Assembly and the Palace, which the republican mob made on the 20th of June, when they marched armed through the hall of the former, and, forcing their entrance into the courts and chambers of the latter, compelled the unhappy monarch to recognize the power of the mob by wearing the red cap, and all but violated the sanctity of his person. The virtual destruction of the monarchy soon followed; for on the 10th of August the government had not the vigour, or Pétion, the mayor, and other heads of the police, had not the honesty, to prevent an armed mob of many thousands from occupying the palace and massacreing the Swiss guards, whom Louis had with

inconceivable folly persisted in retaining about his person, without having the firmness to use them in his defence.

The imprisonment of the royal family and the calling a National Convention, which at its first sitting established the Republic, were the immediate consequences of that memorable day. Yet a few weeks before, sixty-nine out of the eighty-three departments into which France was then divided, had declared themselves friendly to the existing and moderate monarchical constitution ; and only two days before the capture of the Tuileries by the mob, a trial of strength between the parties in the Assembly, on the motion for Lafayette's impeachment, who had openly declared against extreme measures, gave the moderate party a majority of four hundred and six over two hundred and twenty-four voices. When the blow was struck, even before the new elections, these moderate men had disappeared ; and the Convention, containing many members of the second or Legislative Assembly, with all the most eminent of the first or Constituent, was forced to follow with blind deference the councils of the republican leaders, or rather to obey the dictation of the Jacobin Club.

Here let us pause, and respectfully giving ear to the warnings of past experience, as whispered by the historic muse, let us calmly revolve in our

minds the very important lessons of wisdom and of virtue, applicable to all times, which these memorable details from recent annals are fitted to teach.

In the *first* place, they show the danger of neglecting due precautions against the arts and the acts of violent partisans working upon the public mind, and of permitting them to obtain an ascendant, by despising their power, or trusting to their being overwhelmed and lost in the greater multitude of the peaceable and the good. The numbers of the ill-intentioned may be very inconsiderable ; yet the tendency of such extreme opinions, when zealously propagated because fanatically entertained, is always to spread ; their direction is ever forward ; and the disposition of the respectable and peaceable classes is ever to be inactive, sluggish, indifferent, ultimately submissive. When Mr. Burke compared the agitators of his day to the grasshoppers in a summer's sun, and the bulk of the people to the British ox, whose repose under the oak was not broken by the importunate chink rising from the insects of an hour, he painted a picturesque and pleasing image, and one accurate enough for the purpose of showing that the public voice is not spoken by the clamours of the violent. But unhappily the grasshopper fails to represent the agitator in this, that it cannot rouse any one of the minority to the attack ; while the ox does represent but too faithfully the re-

spectable majority, in that he is seldom roused from his ruminating half-slumber till it is too late to avert his fate.

But, *secondly*, it is not merely the activity of agitators that arms them with force to overpower the bulk of the people—their acts of intimidation are far more effectual than any assiduity and any address. We see how a handful of men leading the Paris mob overturned the monarchy, and then set up and maintained an oligarchy of the most despotic character that ever was known in the world, all the while ruling the vast majority of a people that utterly loathed them, ruling that people with an iron rod, and scourging them with scorpions. This feat of tyranny they accomplished by terror alone. A rabble of ten or twelve thousand persons occupying the capital overawed half a million of men as robust, perhaps as brave, as themselves; but the rabble were infuriated, and they had nothing to lose; the Parisian burghers were calm, and had shops, and wives, and children; and they were fain to be still, in order that no outrage should be committed on their property or their persons. The tendency of great meetings of the people is two-fold—their numbers are always exaggerated both by the representations of their leaders* and by the fears of the bystanders; and

* The Irish demagogues speak of addressing three and four hundred thousand persons in districts where the whole population of all ages amounts to less than half the number.

the spectacle of force which they exhibit, and the certainty of the mischief which they are capable of doing, when excited and resisted by any but the force of troops, scares all who do not belong to them. Hence the vast majority of the people, afraid to act, remain quiet, and give the agitators the appearance of having no adversaries. They reverse the maxim, whoso is not with us is against us, and hold all with them whom they may have terrified into silence and repose. That this effect of intimidation is prodigious, no one can doubt. It acts and re-acts; and while fear keeps one portion of the people neutral and quiet, the impression that there is, if not a great assent to the agitators, at least little resistance to them, affects the rest of the people until the great mass is quelled, and large numbers are even induced by their alarms partially to join in the unopposed movement.

But, *lastly*, it behoves us to consider how powerful a voice is raised by these facts in condemnation of the sluggish, the selfish, the pusillanimous conduct of those who, by their acquiescence and neutrality, arm a despicable and unprincipled minority with absolute power. And assuredly a warning, as well as a condemnation, proceeds from the same view of the facts; for nothing can be more short-sighted than the policy of those timid or inactive persons who suffer themselves, for the sake of present ease and safety, to be deterred from performing their

duty to the community. How deeply blameable were the respectable classes of the French capital in preferring their quiet to their duty, and making no head against the clubs and their mob ! But how heavy a penalty did they pay for the momentary repose which their cowardice purchased ! The Reign of Terror, under which no life was secure for a day ; the wholesale butcheries both of the prisoners in September, and by the daily executions that soon followed ; the violence of the conscription, which filled every family with orphans and widows ; the profligate despotism and national disasters under the Directory ; the military tyranny of Napoleon ; the sacrifice of millions to slake his thirst of conquest ; the invasion of France by foreign troops—pandours, hussars, cossacks, twice revelling in the spoils of Paris ; the humiliating occupation of the country for five years by the allied armies, and her ransom by the payment of millions ;—these were the consequences, more or less remote, of the Reign of Terror, which so burnt into the memory of all Frenchmen the horrors of anarchy as to make an aversion to change for a quarter of a century the prevailing characteristic of a people not the least fickle among the nations, and to render a continuance of any yoke bearable, compared with the perils of casting it off. All these evils were the price paid by the respectable classes of France, but especially of Paris, for their

unworthy dread of resisting the clubs and the mob in 1792.

Among the lessons taught by the French Revolution, I have not mentioned the obvious one which it inculcates upon all rulers not to disregard the people's rights, nor withhold such reforms as the people have a title to expect, and as the state of the national institutions demands. For this is the inference from the first stage of the great event, and not from that last consummation which we have been more immediately occupied with. The power of the clubs and the Paris mob did not at all rest upon the refusal of the Government to give whatever improvements were required by the state of France. No pretext could be urged on any such ground either to justify or to palliate the enormities of those who acted in the sanguinary scenes, or the pusillanimity of those who permitted them to usurp and to abuse supreme power. The utmost latitude had been given to reformation in every branch of the state long before any attempts were made to subvert the constitutional government ; and the success of those attempts had nothing whatever to do with the views or the grievances of Reformers, or with any complaints of the people.

We have now traced the establishment of a system of intimidation to its real sources, the

numerical weakness of the Republican party, and their determination to govern the country in spite of the opinions and the wishes of the bulk of the community. They thus succeeded in overthrowing the monarchy, and establishing a republic in its place; but the inevitable consequence of this victory speedily followed. No sooner were they in full and almost undisputed possession of power, than the temper and ambition of individual leaders, seconded by the violence or by the subserviency of inferior persons, their followers, marshalled the Republican body in parties, thirsting for supremacy, animated with bitter, mutual hatred, and wholly unscrupulous about the means which they took to gratify the one passion by usurping the whole powers of government, or the other by destroying their rivals. The Convention was the governing body of the state: its numbers, between seven and eight hundred, were far too great for calm and deliberate discussion; for unless its proceedings had become regulated, like those of our own Parliament, by long usage, and its members had, like our representatives, acquired by practice the habits of orderly debate, such a body was unwieldy and incapable of sustained deliberation. Even as a legislature this defect was unavoidable, and intimately mixed up with its constitution. But much more was the number of its members wholly incompatible with the functions of a body

which possessed the executive as well as the legislative powers, and even interfered with the judicial authority. Hence the want of a vigorous government, in the perils which surrounded the country both from foreign war and from financial embarrassment, rendered it absolutely necessary that the Convention should delegate its powers to smaller bodies; and this led to the appointment of the Committees whose names have become so famous in the history of the times—the Committees of General Security and Public Safety (*De Sûreté Générale* and *De Salut Public*)—of which the latter soon assumed the whole executive power in the state. It consisted of nine, and afterwards of ten, members, among the most eminent of the Jacobin party.

Let it not, however, be supposed that the Convention was a body insignificant from its composition, like the Legislative Assembly. It was far too numerous for action, but it contained the most able and eminent men of the day. In the first place there were fifty-seven of the Constituent Assembly, including twenty-two of the most remarkable of its members—as Robespierre, Siéyes, Prieur de la Marne, Merlin de Douai, Grégoire, Barrère, Boissy d'Anglas. Then there were sixty-six of the Legislative Assembly, much less distinguished men, as might be expected, yet including four or five of eminence—as Condorcet, Merlin de

Thionville. Then there were fifty-eight magistrates, some of whom were eminent—as Cambacérès, Bonnier, Rebecqui, Laréveillère Lepaux, Roberjot—almost all respectable men; seventy-seven advocates, including Danton, Guiton de Morveau, the celebrated chemist, Poulain Grandpré, Ricord, Thibaudeau, Billaud Varennes, Vergniaud; twenty-two physicians, including Fourcroy, Lanthenas, Hardy, Eschasserieux, Dubouchet, Bourgoing; thirteen bishops, including Robert Lindet, Grégoire, Thibault; five Protestant ministers, including Rabaut St. Etienne, Lasonne; nineteen men of letters, almost all of whom had been favourably known by their writings, but Lakanal, Collot d'Herbois, Chénier, Dupuis, Fréron, Fabre d'Eglantine, Mercier, were the most distinguished; to which must be added twenty-six who had become known for their merits, either as men of speculation or action; and in this last class were enrolled the names of Carnôt, Barras, Cambon, Desmoulins, St. Just, Gasparin, Isnard, Legendre, Tallien, Dubois Crancé.

A body thus composed, and chosen by the nation, which, though acting under the influence of the clubs and the mob, yet gave their confidence to the Deputies appointed, certainly possessed resources and power abundantly sufficient for governing the country with vigour; and it soon showed that these powers were intrusted to able hands. The judicious

course taken of delegating the whole executive functions to Committees of small numbers, and the firmness with which the Convention's confidence and support were given to those Committees, is above all praise. Their plan of proceeding early adopted, that of making reports from these bodies, and raising discussions in the Assembly itself upon the subjects brought forward, had the effect of giving the executive power a constant support from the people, whose interest in the public proceedings was thus kept alive; and the Government acted, or seemed to act, as the organ of the community, while its vigour was proportioned to the narrow limits within which its powers were concentrated. The wonderful exertions made for the public defence, the progress of the national arms in foreign conquest, the facility with which the whole resources of the state were called forth and employed for the exigencies of its service, powerfully attest the genius which presided over the revolutionary councils, and the vigour which carried them into effect. The Convention was, like the Venetian aristocracy, the ruling power; but its authority was wielded by the Committee, acting like the Council of Ten, while the Revolutionary Tribunal supplied the Inquisitor's place. Happy, if no other motive had animated and actuated the system but a desire to defend France, or even to extend her dominions!—happy, if, with the force

which the constitution bestowed, there had not continued to grow and overpower, that terror which had from the earlier times of the Revolution proved the mainspring of all its movements !

Very far otherwise was cast the lot of France under the Republican chiefs who now had clothed themselves with the supreme power to direct all her affairs. The system of intimidation which had raised them to their "bad eminence," was now pursued to retain it, by crushing first, next by exterminating, all the leading men among their rivals or their adversaries. But they began with the royal family ; hoping to strike an universal terror into their opponents by the signal example of a king sacrificed to the prevailing faction among his people ; not, however, before they had issued a decree, unexampled in the history of the world, by which they promised the aid of their victorious arms to whatever nation chose to throw off the yoke of its rulers, and establish a republican government in the stead of its ancient monarchical institutions. It was thus the declared resolution of the French leaders not only to annihilate all opposition at home among the Royalist party, but to surround their new republic with similar dynasties, in order to perpetuate the domination of their revolutionary principles by rendering them universal.

But although the death of the King had been resolved upon by the Jacobin leaders, and every

resource of the clubs and of the municipality was called forth to accomplish this purpose, the greatest difficulties were experienced in the Convention. To surmount these, attempts were made to prevent discussion, and come to an immediate vote. All means were resorted to for hampering the King in his defence. At last the speeches of the members were not permitted to be heard, but were ordered to be given in, written, that they might be read or printed. The able defence of the advocates, and the dignified demeanour of the illustrious victim, produced a great effect both on the Assembly and on the country at large. The Gironde party, which really had the majority in the Convention, were for the most part against a capital punishment; and if the vote had been taken on the sentence, before the vote upon the appeal to the Primary Electoral Assemblies, there cannot be a doubt that this appeal would have been carried in the event of a capital punishment being awarded in the first instance. But the leaders craftily prevented this result, which they foresaw; and the Convention, by a blunder perhaps unexampled in the proceedings of a great body of men acting in their deliberative capacity, suffered the question of the appeal to be decided before the facts were known, or the circumstances had occurred which were calculated most imperatively to govern its decision. Hence the jealousy of the primary

Assemblies, and the consciousness that, except in Paris and one or two other great towns, the majority would have voted for an absolute and entire acquittal, induced a great majority to negative the appeal, although a considerable majority would, in all probability, have preferred even that prospect of entire acquittal to the sentence of death, had there been no other alternative. Against the appeal there declared 424 to 283; the vote having been unanimous against an absolute acquittal. The sentence of death, when the votes came to be analyzed, appeared to have been carried only by the majority of five, 721 having voted out of the 750 who composed the Convention.* There cannot be a more striking proof how little the voice of the country at large went with the proceedings of the Republican leaders, than this large minority in an Assembly chosen under the powerful and universal influence of the clubs and the mobs, and sitting at Paris under the constant exertion of that influence in all its forms.

But the death of the King soon terminated all struggle between the moderate and the extreme parties, placing the former at the mercy of their adversaries in the Convention, and subjecting the

* One account made the majority five *against*, instead of *for* the sentence; this was certainly erroneous. Another result obtained was the bare majority of one in its favour. The majority of five given in the text is the result in which all are now well agreed.

Convention itself to the control of the clubs. The establishment of the Revolutionary Tribunal paved the way for this soon after the execution of the King. A body of six, acting alternately three and three, as judges, was appointed by the Convention, to try, with the assistance of a jury chosen by the electoral bodies, and of a public accuser named by the Convention. The jurisdiction of this dreadful tribunal extended over all political offences; and the Convention, rather than the public prosecutor, put parties upon their trial before it. The punishment of death was immediately after decreed by law, against all acts, all publications, all writings, tending to restore the monarchy or attack the Republican government; and the superintendence of the public safety was then confided to the celebrated Committee, which has already been mentioned as soon engrossing the whole executive power of the State.*

* *Salut public* has generally been rendered *public safety*; but the word was rather *salvation* of the public, and expressed, indeed, its eminent functions and extraordinary appointment, as if under a pressing exigency to rescue the State from perdition. It was appointed on the 6th of April, 1793, on the proposition of Isnard, one of the most able, daring, and enthusiastic of the Republican chiefs, and an adherent of the Gironde party, in whose proscription he shared, though he escaped death by flight. He was of a highly respectable family of Grasse, still among the first in that town. I have the pleasure of knowing them well, from living in their neighbourhood.

The Jacobins having in their hands the whole power of this Committee and of the Revolutionary Tribunal, delayed not to use it for the defeat, that is, the extermination of their opponents. After a struggle of a few months, they succeeded in putting the Queen to death by a mock trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal. By a like proceeding they put Custine, one of their very best generals, to death for having surrendered Valenciennes, when it was in fact taken by regular siege, if not by storm. They prevented a Royalist insurrection at Lyons by destroying a great part of that noble city, and massacreing many hundreds of its inhabitants. They procured the execution of the Gironde leaders, Brissot, Vergniaud, and twenty others; and they sacrificed in like manner to their thirst of vengeance and lust of power some of the most eminent soldiers and philosophers of France, Luckner, Houchard, Bailly, Lavoisier, to whom may be added Barnave, the successor of Mirabeau, as by far the greatest orator of the Assembly, and the virtuous and accomplished Rolands.

The destruction of the Brissotine or Gironde party left the Convention entirely under the power of the Jacobins; and it was now found that the Committee of Public Safety, while it ruled the State, exercising over the Convention an uncontrolled influence, had fallen under the power of Robespierre and two adherents, who proved his

devoted partisans on all occasions, Couthon and St. Just. The other members of the Committee confined themselves each to his particular department ; thus Carnôt conducted the whole operations of the war, and with a success so brilliant, that the only legitimate influence possessed by the Committee rested upon the fame which they thus acquired in exalting the national glory. The terror which they inspired by the sanguinary proceedings of the Revolutionary Tribunal was no doubt the main source of their power. But it may well be questioned whether, without the victories of their armies on every part of their frontier from the Ebro to the Scheldt, they could have sustained their ascendancy ; and it is certain that any great reverses, which should again have exposed the capital to the risk of invasion, would speedily have wrought their overthrow and opened men's eyes to the tyranny under which they were fain to crouch while danger was afar off.

Although Robespierre* was all-powerful in the Committee, resting as he did upon the Jacobin Club, over which he ruled with an absolute domi-

* As his rise had throughout been gradual, even slow, and aided by no sudden strokes of boldness, nor furthered by any brilliant talents, he only became a member of the Committee about the end of July, having before the 26th of that month belonged to the Committee of General Defence, which afterwards merged in that of Public Safety.

nion; and although the Committee exercised an equal sway over the Convention, which, however, gave its confidence to the genius and the boldness that directed all the executive councils, making the war an uninterrupted series of victories, there soon appeared among its members men, not belonging to the Committee, but eminent for their services in the Revolution, and distinguished for their capacity and disposition to assert their claims, and aspire to a share in the supreme power. It could not, indeed, be said that any regular party had been formed in opposition to the Committee of Public Safety, because the spirit of patriotism which generally prevailed, making men forget all but the interests of the country, that is, of the revolutionary system, rendered all faction odious, and branded it with the name of treason. Yet the Committee did not contain all the great men of the day; and the exclusion of some soon produced its wonted effect of sowing the seeds of discontent, leading towards resistance on the one side, and jealousy tending to persecution on the other. While such men as Danton,* Tallien, Camille Desmoulins, Bourdon de l'Oise, were deprived of all share in the government, the Triumvirate of

* Danton's exclusion, however, was voluntary: he had declined the proposal to be named upon the Committee, and sick of the excesses into which the Revolution was plunging, rather than alarmed at its prospects, had retired for some months to his native place, Arcis-sur-Aube.

Robespierre could not deem themselves secure. Accordingly, after the fall of the Gironde had been followed by continual trials and condemnations, terms almost convertible in those dismal times, when hundreds of victims had fallen a sacrifice to the dictator's thirst of power and dread of resistance, the kindlier nature of Danton, long outraged by such dreadful scenes, revolted, and Camille entirely joining him in these natural feelings, the tyrant became alarmed. An interview took place, at which their reconciliation was attempted by common friends, alarmed at so perilous an event as their open rupture must prove to the dominant party: Robespierre received Danton's representations with haughty reserve; showed no disposition to be cordially reconciled; indicated on the contrary an impression that the breach might widen without any loss to his party; and left Danton with such a conviction of his doom being sealed, that he said he perceived his fate approaching, but warned Robespierre that it would draw after it his own destruction. A remarkable incident occurred at this meeting. When Danton spoke of the innocent lives that had been sacrificed to the system of terror, Robespierre coldly asked, "*Et qui vous aura dit qu'un seul innocent a péri?*"—to which Danton, turning to the friend who had accompanied him, said, with a smile, the bitterness of which must have made a deep im-

pression on the relater, for all the histories, and memoirs, and treatises have noted it, “*Qu’en distu? Pas un innocent n’a péri!*” (“There’s for you! or, What say you to that? Not a drop of innocent blood has been shed!”)

The sacrifice of Danton, Camille, and their friends, soon after put the seal upon the tyrant’s power, and completed the subjection of the whole Convention, whose members, terrified at the approach of death, should they either differ or be suspected of differing with the Triumvirate, for the most part ceased to attend, insomuch that of the seven hundred and fifty composing it, not above two hundred usually appeared in their places. The executions now reached the enormous amount of fifty and sixty a-day; the most marvellous levity was shown in condemning and executing even persons against whom not the shadow of a proof was offered; constantly by mere mistake one was taken for another; sometimes persons were hurried into the fatal cart which conveyed the victims to the scaffold, merely because the appointed numbers were not complete. But the vilest passions of individuals were also gratified,—their malignant spite or their sordid avarice. It would be endless to recite the instances which abound of these things in this the darkest page of French history, which make even the days of St. Bartholomew assume a lighter aspect. Thus the parties to a bill of

exchange connected with counter-revolutionary proceedings were all brought before the tribunal, and all condemned to die in the mass. M. Berryer, a celebrated lawyer, and father of the famous Carlist leader in our times, happened to call on a notary named Martin, a highly respectable man, wholly unconnected with politics. A few hours after he had seen him in his office, M. Berryer met the cart carrying its miserable lading to the place of punishment, and to his unspeakable horror saw M. Martin among the victims. He was executed. On inquiry it was found that his name had been appended to the bill to authenticate a notarial act—that is, the protesting of the bill—with which therefore he not only had no more concern than the paper-maker or ink-seller, who had furnished the materials of the instrument, but he actually had rather been concerned in a proceeding against its validity. All the parties to it had been condemned in their absence; and the only question put to M. Martin was, whether he acknowledged his handwriting. On his answering in the affirmative, he was told that the sentence applied to him, and must be executed.* A respectable man, M. Frecot de Lantz, of eighty years old, bed-ridden for twenty years, and so deaf that he was wholly unable to hear the questions put at his trial, was condemned and executed for having

* *Souvenirs de Berryer*, vol. i. p. 213.

conspired against the republic. The public prosecutor, Coffinhal, among other rude and revolting pleasantries, said to the jury, "Il faut en finir. Vous voyez bien qu'il conspire *sourdement*."*

A wretch called Heron, a fraudulent bankrupt, who, driven to South America, brought back a fabricated order of the Spanish government for six thousand pounds, which no Paris banking-house would discount, denounced ten or twelve of the first bankers merely because they had refused to honour his forgery. Some were executed, others paid vast sums for their escape, Couthon declaring that the public "owed to Heron the discovery of some of the worst, because the wealthiest,† conspirators;" and another member of the Convention protesting that he never knew a better revolutionist.‡ For the escape of one banker, M. Magon de la Balue, an unknown person, bringing passports ready signed, but in blank, demanded twelve thousand pounds. It was refused, and the miserable man, against whom, except the miscreant Heron's tales, there existed not the shadow of a charge, much less any proof, was hurried to the scaffold.§ The incidents are

* Souvenirs de Berryer, p. 203.

† *Négotiantisme* was a known offence in the Reign of Terror, and meant to indicate the tendency of wealth towards regular and lawful government; just as *Modérantisme* was the offence of disliking anarchy, and violence, and blood.

‡ Souvenirs de Berryer, vol. i. p. 168.

§ Ibid., p. 173.

numberless of a similar malignant rancour, or sordid cupidity ; and no doubt can remain of the facilities which the sanguinary course of the Committee afforded for gratifying all such vile propensities.

Then, as if the Revolutionary Tribunal afforded too little scope for the perpetration of wholesale murder, new expedients of blood were devised. A law was propounded to increase the number of victims, by making four Revolutionary Tribunals sit at the same time, and condemning persons without hearing their defence. It had, as early as October, 1793, been decreed that if any trial lasted three days and no sentence was passed, the tribunal might declare its conscience satisfied, close the proceedings, and pronounce judgment. In the June following came the consummation of injustice, the incredible law that if the tribunal was satisfied either with moral conviction or material proof, it might without evidence proceed to condemnation. Advocates were by the same infernal law denied to parties accused, for the reason assigned, that the patriotic jurors were the protectors of all patriots,*

* In Robespierre's hand-writing the draught was found of one of these detestable laws. Its preamble sets forth the delays which had occurred from the difficulty of convicting eminent persons, and the scope thus afforded to aristocratic tumults and counter-revolutionary intrigues ; and it gives as the ground of the new law, that "it is at once absurd and contrary to the institution of the Revolutionary Tribunal to subject to eternal procedure crimes of which a whole nation

and that conspirators deserved no assistance! These laws soon raised the number of victims to seven and eight hundred in a month.*

is the denonnceur, and the universe the witness."—It then requires the president to open the fourth day's sitting with a question to the jury, "Is their conscience sufficiently informed?" (*éclairée*); and on an affirmative answer, he is immediately to pronounce sentence. He is also peremptorily required to suffer no questions (*interpellations*), nor any other incident inconsistent with this law. (*Papiers Inédits*, vol. ii. p. 1.)

* In April, May, June, July, 1793, the number of executions was only 41. In the five following months it had risen to 206,—viz. four times as many. In the first three months of 1794 it was 281, or above double that of the former period. But it then went on awfully increasing, so that in May it was 324; in June 672; and in July 895, without reckoning Robespierre and his party, executed at the end of that month. As many as 67 perished in one day, 7th of July. It is a most remarkable fact that a very great proportion of the persons thus put to death were of the most obscure station, and many were women of very advanced age; nor can there be a doubt that the guillotine ministered to the craving of personal and family cupidity, or spite. In the provinces, especially in the south, the same bloody scenes were enacted: the fiery temperament of the people increasing in those parts the violence of faction. Some places are noted for the fury with which the passions were inflamed. At Orange near Aix, in Provence, the worst atrocities were perpetrated. The same place exposed Napoleon's life to imminent hazard when he made his retreat to Elba in 1814. In 1830, its people were so split into violent parties, that each family was divided against itself. Nor can the traveller at this day fail to mark, as he but passes, the fierce aspect of its inhabitants. The atrocities, however, committed by the

The revolutionary mode of proceeding, when once adopted at Paris, was extended to the tribunals in the provinces. Indeed we find the constitution of the revolutionary tribunal of Orange planned some weeks before the new system was established in the capital. These are the remarkable directions for its process—concise enough, and abundantly significant:—"Ce tribunal jugera révolutionnairement, sans instruction écrite, et sans assistance de jurés. Les témoins entendus, les interrogations faites, les pièces à charge lues, l'accusateur public entendu, le jugement sera prononcé."* There is an entire omission of the defence, and of all evidence in exculpation.—(*Papiers Inédits*, vol. i. p. 101.) It is remarkable that though the six members to compose this sanguinary court were carefully selected, with power to divide themselves into two courts for expediting their horrid business, not many days elapsed before some of them showed symptoms, if not of tenderness, yet at least of regard for justice, and

monster Carrier at Nantes, where the Loire was literally dyed with Royalist blood, have long attained the dreadful eminence of almost making the other cruelties of the time be forgotten.

* "This tribunal shall try in the revolutionary manner, without written indictment, and without jury. After hearing the witnesses, interrogating the accused, reading the documents in support of the charge, and hearing the public prosecutor, sentence shall be pronounced."

of reluctance to commit wholesale murder. The president, Fauvetz, writes to Payan, the national agent of the municipality of Paris, who suffered with Robespierre, that their proceedings, though affording a brilliant contrast with that of the Tribunal of Nîmes—having in six days sentenced 197 persons, which was more than they had done at Nîmes in as many months—were yet hampered and thwarted by the over-scrupulous nature of three of their members; one of whom, Fonrosa, is too fond of forms, and though an “excellent person, yet falls somewhat short of the revolutionary point:” another, Meilleret, “utterly useless in the post he fills, so far as sometimes to acquit counter-revolutionary priests, and to require proofs of guilt, as in the ordinary courts of the old régime.”—“God grant,” ejaculates the pious chief judge, “that Ragot, Ternex, and myself, who are up to the right pace (*qui sommes au pas*), may not be taken ill! Should such a misfortune happen, the tribunal would only distil pure water, and be at best on a level with the ordinary courts of the country.”

This account of the peculiar structure of Fonrosa’s understanding, which made him slow in putting innocent men to death, drew from Payan a most warm but affectionate remonstrance; which we find among the documents appended to Courtois’s Report. After referring to his own long experience in such proceedings, he earnestly be-

speeches him to consider the entire difference between a revolutionary and an ordinary tribunal; that it is wholly immaterial to ask whether or not the accused has been heard patiently, and at length, in his defence; but only whether he is guilty or not: and that in considering this the judge's conscience is to stand in the place of all the old forms. He exhorts him not to be afraid of the innocent suffering, but only of the guilty escaping; affirming that whoever has not been for the Revolution has been against it, and simply because he has done no public service: and he reminds him that whoever escapes punishment will one day be the death of many Republicans. In fine, he tells him, "You have a great mission to fulfil. Forget that nature has made you a man, and endowed you with feelings" (*Oublie que la nature te fit homme et sensible*): "remember that all those who affected to be wiser and more just than their colleagues were either crafty conspirators or weak dupes, unworthy of the Republic; and choose between the love and the hatred of the people." He closes this singular letter by professions of the purest esteem, which, he says, has dictated it, and by calling on his correspondent to read it over and over again (*sans cesse*), and "especially before trying the wretches whom he has to destroy."—(*Rapport de Courtois*, p. 397.) Fonrosa's answer to this letter, justifying himself, would seem to show that there was but a

slender foundation for the charge made against him. He only appears to have required that some note should be kept of the names and designations of the parties tried, of the heads of the charges, and of the principal points of the evidence. The small number of clerks, however, rendered this a serious interruption to the work of blood; and hence the impatience of all such formalities testified by the chief judge, to whose letter of complaint I have adverted.

It is needless to multiply examples: but the proceedings at Lyons require a few words. We have, among many other records of these tragical scenes, the correspondence of the principal actor in them, Collot d'Herbois. To some of the letters Fouche's name is also appended; but he has, in private at least, positively denied the authenticity of the subscription, as we shall afterwards see in Lord Stanhope's valuable note.

The accomplishment of Collot's grand object, the destruction of Lyons, is obstructed by the vast number of the inhabitants—150,000; and both he and Couthon are found planning the dispersion of some 100,000 of them over the country, where they might mingle with the Republican population, and become partakers of its civic virtues. However, as far as man could act in such circumstances, Collot boasts of his progress; and he lays down his principles:—"We have revived the action of a

Republican justice," he says, " prompt and terrible as the will of the people ! It must strike traitors like the lightning, and only leave their ashes in existence ! In destroying one infamous and rebellious city, you consolidate all the rest. In causing the wicked to perish, you secure the lives of all generations of freemen. Such are our principles. We go on demolishing, with the fire of artillery and with the explosion of mines, as fast as possible. But you must be sensible that, with a population of 150,000 inhabitants, these processes find many obstacles. The popular axe cuts off twenty heads a-day, and still the conspirators are not daunted. The prisons are choked with them. We have erected a Commission, as prompt in its operations as the conscience of true Republicans trying traitors can possibly be. Sixty-four of these were shot yesterday on the spot where they had fired on the patriots ; two hundred and thirty are to fall this day in the ditches where their execrable works had vomited death on the Republican army. These grand examples will have their effect with the cities that remain in doubt ; where there are men who affect a false and barbarous sensibility, while ours is all reserved for the country."*

* The admixture of private with public feeling is found in this, as in all the other pieces of the Jacobin correspondence ; and Robespierre, generally called "*Maximilien*," or "*Our dear Maximilian*," is the object of constant solicitude and tenderness.

" All

Such, in Paris and the provinces, were the proceedings of the Reign of Terror, while the Triumvirate, Robespierre, Couthon, St. Just, bore sway, until at length the discovery of a list, in which many deputies were proscribed and marked for execution, roused the Convention from its slumber of fear, overthrew the tyrants, and restored something like security and freedom to the legislature and the people of Paris, while the analogous proceedings of the provincial clubs and tribunals were also suspended.

We may now pause awhile to contemplate the character, intellectual as well as moral, and to scan the views of the singular men who played the chief parts in that terrible drama, of which we have been observing the successive scenes. And of one thing we may rest fully assured, that they commit a great mistake who ascribe, as was very generally done at the time, no motives but those of mere sanguinary cruelty or insane ambition to their con-

“All those,” continues Collot, “who have traversed the revolution with a firm step (that is, unruined by ‘false and barbarous sensibility’) are inseparably united together. It is the love of their country that cements the fraternal friendship which knits their hearts together. Give the assurance of my friendship, entire and unalterable, to your Republican family. Squeeze, in my name, Robespierre’s hand. Your son, a good citizen, a happy father, already strong in the principles in which he has been brought up,” &c. “What a satisfaction for Republicans, the fulfilment of these duties!”

duct. That with most of them their proceedings degenerated into such courses—that the more savage and selfish parts of their nature finally prevailed, and bore them away from every humane affection or virtuous principle, may be very true; and yet most of them began with being the dupes of exaggerated patriotism and public spirit, the sport of a political and philosophic fanaticism; and it was only after these dangerous excesses had steeled their minds against the ordinary impulses of our nature, that they gave themselves up to the propensities of a more vulgar ambition, and indulged in the more common gratification of personal hatred or vengeance. That a familiarity with scenes of blood, both in the field and on the scaffold, had produced its natural effect in hardening the heart, and that the fanatical sentiments of enthusiasm had borne their appointed fruit, of making the sufferings and even extinction of others disregarded when they were the means working towards the end so vehemently desired, can nowise be doubted.

The records of the Reign of Terror bear constant witness to these positions. But perhaps no such testimony is stronger than that of the correspondence published after Robespierre's downfall in May, 1794; to parts of which I have already referred. The Committee of Public Safety had, according to its usual policy of having an emissary

to aid or to control the national representative in every important place, sent M. Julien to Bordeaux, where Ysabeau was suspected of being lukewarm, and to Nantes, where Carrier had rendered himself remarkable for an unscrupulous excess of zeal—an excess, however, which does not appear to have created any very unfavourable feelings towards him on the part of the executive government. We find this emissary writing confidentially to Robespierre respecting the monster Carrier and his atrocious murders; but not a word of execration finds or forces its way into his narrative. He speaks of Royalist soldiers butchered, and of the Loire flowing red with blood; but it is only to express his sorrow for the pestilence engendered by the heaps of corpses, and for the impediments occasioned to the navigation of the river. Whether it be that he dared not reprobate the acts of patriotic butchery, even in writing to his colleague, for fear his letter should be read, and expose him to the fury of zealous citizens, or that he really was callous to all feelings of humanity, needs hardly be inquired into; the inference is the same on either supposition.* The same silence is to be remarked

* *Papiers Inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, vol. iii. p. 44. This work is of the deepest interest. When the Triumvirate were overthrown at the revolution of the 9th and 10th Thermidor, there were found many papers in the repositories of Robespierre, St. Just, and others. A committee was charged to draw up a report, and Courtois made it to the Convention.

in the correspondence respecting Collot d'Herbois's massacres at Lyons; or rather, Julien brings it as a charge against Ysabeau that he had spoken disrespectfully of those celebrated *fusillades*.* A like remark arises upon a fact communicated by Lord Stanhope, which the reader will find in his interesting notes upon Fouché. When that famous revolutionary leader was denying his share in the proceedings at Lyons, and was reminded of the reports published in his name jointly with his associate Collot, his answer was that "to have merely contradicted his having the share ascribed to him in the massacres would have exposed him to destruction,"—that is, because it would have betokened a disapproval and repudiation of the honour intended to be done him.

But though all these scenes ended in perverting the nature of the actors, and even in some degree of the spectators, the chiefs of the Revolution were originally of a better temper, and actuated by purer feelings. This is even, to a certain extent, true of Robespierre, the most remarkable of them all; but it is true of him in a very much lesser measure than of any other revolutionary chief except St. Just.

It was printed in one volume. But in 1828 the suppressed papers were published in three volumes, with Courtois's Report.

* *Papiers Inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, vol. iii. p. 27.

ROBESPIERRE.

It would be difficult to point out within the whole range of history, ancient or modern, any person who played so great a part as Robespierre with so little genius. Those who were not brilliant, whose parts were not such as dazzle the vulgar, and thus, by bestowing fame and influence, smooth the way to power, have generally possessed some depth of intellect, some mental force which compensated, and far more than compensated, the want of shining faculties; or, if their intellectual endowments were moderate, they have by a splendid courage struck awe into the hearts of mankind; or at least by extraordinary vigour and constitutional firmness of purpose, they have overpowered, though more slowly, all resistance to their will, and with constancy won their way to the head of affairs. Nor are instances wanting, and perhaps Henry IV. of France is the most remarkable, of amiable dispositions gaining the affections of men, and making up for the want of any very extraordinary gifts either of a moral or an intellectual kind. But in Robespierre we can trace not a vestige of any such

kinds of excellence, if it be not that he was unremitting in his pursuit of aggrandisement, and had as much firmness in this regard as was consistent with a feeble and cowardly nature. Nor is the secret of his rise to be found in the circumstances of the times; these were common to all candidates for power; and he who outstrips all competitors must have some superiority over them, natural or acquired, to account for his success.

It may be admitted, in all probability, that his vices had in the peculiar crisis a chief part in the mastery which he obtained; and his early possession of a secret more imperfectly known to others, perhaps only to him in its entirety, was that which, when coupled with those great vices, enabled him to act his extraordinary part. He, from the dawn of the Revolution, saw with perfect clearness and precision the disposition of the multitude to be roused, their power when excited, and the manner in which to excite them most surely. He perceived with unerring certainty the magical effect of taking extreme courses, gratifying their disposition to excess, freeing them by removing all restraints, and, above all, avoiding the risk of quenching the flame by any interposition of moderate councils, any thwarting of the spirit that had been raised. The perfectly unscrupulous nature of his mind, the total want of all kindly or gentle feelings, the destitution of even common

humanity when the purpose of gratifying the propensity to violence was to be accomplished, and the superadded excitement of the war to make the mob first his tools, and then his slaves, enabled him to satiate that thirst, first of destruction, then of fame, which swiftly became a fiercer thirst of power, and while it could hardly be slaked by any draughts of the intoxicating beverage, clothed him with the attributes of a fiend towards all who either would interrupt or would share his infernal debauch.

The frame of his mind was eminently fitted for sustaining as well as devising the part which he played. From his earliest years he had never been known to indulge in the frolics or evince the gaiety of youth. Gloomy, solitary, austere, intent upon his work, careless of relaxation, averse to amusement, without a confidant, or friend, or even companion, it is recorded of him that at the College of Louis le Grand, where he was educated with Camille, Fréron, and Le Brun, he was never seen once to smile. As a boy and a youth he was remarkable for vanity, jealousy, dissimulation, and trick, with an invincible obstinacy on all subjects, a selfishness hardly natural, a disposition incapable of forgiving any injury, but a close concealment of his resentment till the occasion arose of gratifying it, and till he dared to show it in safety. It would have been difficult to bring into the tempest of the

Revolution qualities more likely to weather its fury, and take advantage of its force ; but he lacked the courage which alone can enable any man long to “ride in the whirlwind and direct the storm ;” for his nature was essentially base and timid, the frame of his body corresponding to the paltriness of his soul. Nature had likewise given warning to the beholder by marking his aspect with a singular ugliness and meanness, which the ravages of the small-pox rendered still more forbidding.

With these defects, and that entire want of generous, or kindly, or even ordinarily human feelings which they betoken or cause, he possessed some qualities which mainly contributed to his elevation, first from the obscurity of a not very eminent practitioner at the not very celebrated bar of Arras, to distinction in the Constituent Assembly ; and afterwards from the position of a second-rate debater* to the supreme power in the state, which he wielded during by far the most critical period of French history in any age. His thirst, first of distinction to gratify his inordinate vanity, and then of power to feed the ambition that had grown up in so rank and poor a soil, was inordinate, and, possessing his whole soul, left no place for any rival principle of action, no avenue open to any natural feeling which might dispute

* This underrating applies to his powers as a debater only. His eloquence was unquestionable as a speaker.

for mastery with the ruling passion. From his earliest years, when the question was merely of vanity, this was his nature ; and viewing all rivals, all obstacles, as only to be extirpated and destroyed, he would have killed, if he dared, the competitors for a college prize or a school reward, as remorselessly as he afterwards exterminated the Brissots, the Héberts, and the Dantons, who crossed the path of his ambition. Vanity often prepares the soil for ambition ; but generally like a crop which is to be consumed before the more important growth begins, with which that base weed seldom is seen to grow up. But the personal conceit of Robespierre kept pace with his love of dominion ; affronts offered to it caused many of his murders ; nay, its indulgence seriously affected his power, and it is more than probable hastened his downfall. For the festival in honour of the Supreme Being, the precursor of his fate, and a main assistance to his enemies, was wholly unnecessary for re-establishing religion, and, except ministering to his personal vanity, gained no object but that of exciting distrust and alarm among the infidel parts of the community, without at all reconciling the votaries of Christianity.

From the entire occupation of his mind by the prevailing propensity, proceeded, of course, his exclusive devotion to its gratification.* It may

* My late learned and able friend M. Lakanal, in his valu-

be questioned whether in the whole course of his life Robespierre was for an instant unoccupied with the subject—whether he ever wasted one thought upon any other. The effect of this absolute devotion is incalculable. It supplies many deficiencies; it gives force to very moderate strength of mind; it calls forth the whole resources of the individual; it nerves the faculties with a vigour for want of which far ampler powers are paralyzed; as an insignificant bullet fired from a gun will destroy, when a cannon-ball thrown by the hand falls innocuous at the feet of the object.

From the same exclusive devotion to the one pursuit of his whole existence arose also the utter disregard of all other gratifications, aided possibly by an extremely cold temperament. With the exception of wine, in which he at one period of his life indulged, in order, probably, to soothe his constitutional irritability, and assist the morbid digestion that shed a sallow hue over his repulsive features, he never was known to partake of any sensual indulgence.* But the austerity of the

able notes upon his Colleagues of the Revolution, heads a few remarks on Robespierre with this line—

“Hoc genus est hominum cupiens præcellere cunctis;”
as if he deemed personal vanity the distinguishing characteristic of the dictator’s nature.

* A connexion has been supposed to have existed between him and the daughter of the family with which he lodged; but the evidence of this is too slight to be relied on.

republican character, which he so greatly affected, also precluded all ordinary pleasures; and he carried this, which cost him nothing, to the same excess with most of his colleagues, excepting only that, in the article of dress, his petty personal vanity made him shun the squalid attire of the other Jacobins, and affect something of the old garb of good society. Nay, his room, a handsome *boudoir*, was filled with pictures, prints, and busts of his own frightful person; and he is supposed to have worn green spectacles for the purpose of concealing the timid movements of his eyes.* Avarice he had none, not because with his habits money was an useless incumbrance, for we often see the passion of acquiring keep such pace with that of hoarding wealth, that all use of the treasure so keenly sought after is out of the question; but avarice was no vice or weakness of his, and it would have been as hard to bribe him from his path with money as to make him compromise his principles, or assumed principles, for place.

He soon acquired, and even retained, the name so popular at all times, in revolutions so omnipotent, of "*Incorruptible*."† How came it to pass that

* The *Mémoires de Barbaroux*, p. 63, give a similar account of his *boudoir*, but deny the statement of Helen Maria Williams, that his sight was good, and required no glasses.

† I have not thought it worth while in the text to make any remark upon the only pretence anywhere to be found

while all, or nearly all, were equally careless of money; while the terrible Committee, with the disposal of uncounted millions, limited their whole

of a charge against Robespierre's honesty in money matters. It is a letter printed in the Report of Courtois, as having been found among his papers; and it is evidently a fabrication. The reader will find it at p. 221, forming the lxi. piece of the Appendix; it is also given in the *Papiers Inédits*, tom. ii. p. 156. It purports to be a letter from some one unknown, at some place also unknown, respecting funds supposed to have been intrusted to him for the purpose of facilitating Robespierre's escape. The first sentence convicts its author of gross and daring forgery. Who in such circumstances would do more than allude to the funds under his care? But the writer is made to say, "les effets que vous m'avez fait adresser pour continuer le plan de faciliter votre retraite dans ce pays-ci"—(the money you sent me in order to carry on the plan of facilitating your escape into this country). He then speaks of Robespierre as about to fly from a "theatre where he must soon appear and disappear for the last time;" and goes on to show him how near the scaffold the elevation to the chair of the Convention (probably meaning at the festival in honour of the Deity) had brought him. It proceeds thus: "Since you have succeeded in providing yourself here with a large sum (*un trésor*) sufficient to support you for a long time, as well as those for whom I have received money from you, I shall expect you impatiently, that we may laugh together over the part you will have played in a nation as credulous as it is fond of novelty." Surely a more gross and clumsy fabrication never was attempted, nor does its publication reflect credit either on the Government that published it, or the Report in which it appeared. The improbability of Robespierre's keeping such a letter in his repositories is of itself sufficient to destroy its credit.

salary and whole expenditure to eight shillings a-day, and all ended their lives in the greatest distress—he alone should be called the “*Incorruptible*?” The reason is to be sought for elsewhere than in the freedom from pecuniary corruption; for his possessing the feature common to them all never would have formed a mark of distinction. But as he had early perceived the power of the people—that is, the power of the multitude acting on or overawing the people; so had he observed almost as early the favour in their eyes of extreme courses; of the unhesitating pursuit of one principle without the least deviation to suit the temporary purposes of expediency, or the least temporizing to consult prudential views, whether of individual advantage or of public safety; and he saw that as whoever most rigidly conformed his course to this canon, so whoever went further than others, outbidding them in violence and in blindness to all the advantages of compromise, was sure to carry away the chief favour of the unreflecting multitude. By this view was his conduct always guided; and as the people were ever sure to find him foremost among the more violent, ever at the head of those who would sacrifice all considerations to the favourite maxims, falsely called the *principles*, of the day—laying all prudence on the shelf—giving moderation to the winds—flinging peace to the dogs, the dogs of war—now crying

“*perish the colonies,*”—now, “*perish commerce*”—and ever ready to wade through blood, the best blood of France, towards the attainment of the darling equality and unbridled licence of the multitude—he was for this hailed as the “*Incorruptible*” that no one could ever doubt on any question which side he would take, and no one could expect others to outstrip his zeal and determination.

There remain some remarkable proofs and illustrations, of unquestionable authenticity (for they are under his own hand), of the extremes to which he had made up his mind, and the enmity which he bore to all the reputable classes of society. The correspondence of his emissaries in various quarters is filled with the like indications. Aristocracy, counter-revolutionary principle, royalism itself, appear not to excite more alarm and hostility among them than mere wealth; and hence *négotiantisme* equally with *modérantisme* is taken for a sure symptom of *incivisme*, and places those who have it alike under grave suspicion. The design of a crusade against property, a general levelling of condition as well as an equality of all civil rights, has been often imputed to Robespierre, and apparently without sufficient foundation. It is certain that such a scheme, an agrarian division of property, was one of the main tenets of the Hébertiste or Cordelier party, against whom he made the greatest exertions, exertions which speedily led to their destruction. But

his hatred of the middle classes, and constant appeals to the multitude against the *bourgeoisie*, can in nowise be doubted; and it forms the burthen of his song in many pieces found after his death. Thus, in a kind of civic catechism we find the question, "Who are our enemies?" answered with "The vicious and the wealthy." Again, "What favours their attacks upon us?"—"The ignorance of the multitude, or lower classes" (*sans-culottes*.) In another piece we find this doctrine—"Les dangers intérieurs viennent des bourgeois; pour vaincre les bourgeois il faut rallier le peuple—tout étoit disposé pour mettre le peuple sous le joug des bourgeois—ils ont triomphé à Marseille, à Bordeaux, à Lyon; ils auroient triomphé à Paris sans l'insurrection actuelle. Il faut que l'insurrection actuelle continue—il faut que le peuple s'allie à la Convention, et que la Convention se serve du peuple—il faut que l'insurrection s'étende de proche en proche sur le même plan; que les sans-culottes soient payés et restent dans les villes. Il faut leur procurer des armes, les colerer, les éclairer."*

* "Our internal perils arise from the middle class; to overcome that class we must rally the people. Everything was prepared for subjecting the people to the yoke of the middle class; that class has triumphed at Marseilles, at Bordeaux, at Lyons; it would have triumphed at Paris, but for the present insurrection. This insurrection must continue. The people must ally itself with the Convention, and the Convention must make use of the people. The insurrection

Of the talents of Robespierre I have already spoken in general; but it remains to examine a little more in detail his claims of distinction as a speaker and a writer. There is some difficulty in separating the two characters, because in his time written speeches were far more frequently used than spoken; yet we are not left without proofs of his powers as an orator.

It has been customary with contemporary authors, and especially with those of our own country, to rate his capacity very low; and some with whom I have conversed of his colleagues, represent him as a cold and very second-rate speaker (*médiocre*), whose oratory consisted in a tissue of common-places, with dissertations on virtue, crime, conspiracy, though with a prevailing vein of sarcasm and considerable power of epigram or antithesis. These have described him as very barren of ideas, and by no means possessing facility of composition—which indeed the manuscripts found on his death seemed to prove by the constant and repeated alterations that prevailed through them all. It is to be observed, on the other hand, that General Carnôt expressly gave as one of the means by which he rose to power, his facility of speech and of composition :

must spread gradually on the same plan; the lower classes must be paid to remain in the houses; they must be furnished with arms, enraged, enlightened.”—*Papiers Inédits*, vol. ii. pp. 13, 15

“ D’abord (I remember he said) il avoit les paroles à la main.” Nor can we rely much in opposition to this upon the undoubted fact that, when accused by Louvet and Barbaroux, he asked for a week to prepare his defence. The delay in all probability had a very different object from that of making his speech. He was willing that the impression produced by the charges, and by the ability shown in their support, should be allowed to wear out at a time when sudden resolutions were not so often taken as afterwards, and therefore he could safely postpone his defence; and above all he was most likely working with his faithful Jacobins, to defeat the accusation and carry him through, whatever might be the effect of the debates in the Convention.

It seems, however, that we are not left to conjecture on his powers as a speaker, even as a debater. Inferior he certainly was to the greatest who appeared in the Revolution, as Mirabeau, Barnave his successor, and Vergniaud, perhaps the highest of the three. But we have abundant proof of his coming very near them, at least in effective declamation, and proof that in readiness he was not easily surpassed. Let two instances suffice; but they are remarkable ones, and they are decisive.

Dupont, an adherent of the Lameth party, used insulting gestures towards him. He calmly said, addressing the chair, “ M. le Président, je vous prie

de dire à M. Dupont, de ne pas m'insulter, s'il veut rester auprès de moi." Then turning alternately to Dupont and the Lameths, he proceeded :

"Je ne présume pas qu'il existe dans cette Assemblée un homme assez *lache*, pour transiger avec la cour, sur un article de notre code constitutionnel (all eyes were fixed on the party of Lameth)—assez *perfid*e pour faire proposer par elle des changemens nouveaux, que la pudeur ne lui permettroit pas de proposer lui-même (much applause and looks again directed towards Dupont and the Lameths)—assez *ennemi de la patrie* pour chercher décréditer la constitution parcequ'elle mettroit quelque borne à son ambition ou à sa cupidité (more applause)—assez *impudent*, pour avouer aux yeux de la nation qu'il n'a cherché dans la révolution que des moyens de s'aggrandir et de s'élever. Car je ne veux regarder certains écrits et certains discours qui pourroient présenter ce sens, que comme l'explosion passagère du dépit déjà expié par le repentir. Non ; du moins nous ne serons ni assez stupides, ni assez indifférens, pour consentir à être le jouet éternel de l'intrigue, pour renverser successivement les diverses parties de notre ouvrage au gré de quelques ambitieux." Then raising his voice, "Je demande que chacun de vous jure qu'il ne consentira jamais à composer avec le pouvoir exécutif sur aucun article de la constitution sous peine d'être déclaré traître à la nation." The effect of this speech was

electrical, as may well be imagined. The Lameth party had long been on the decline, and this proved their destruction.

The great struggle between the Mountain and the Gironde began with a debate in which Robespierre made a very successful attack upon them; but Vergniaud's reply, notwithstanding the extreme applause which attended his adversary's, greatly exceeded it in power, and won over even many of the Mountain to his side. Very different was the result of the hot conflict between the same redoubtable chiefs on the famous 31st of May, 1793. While Robespierre was going on, "Non ! il faut purger l'armée ! Il faut"—Vergniaud impatiently interrupted him with "Concluez donc"—whereupon Robespierre instantly turned on him, and continued, "Oui ! je vais conclure, et contre vous !—contre vous, qui, après la révolution du 10 Août, avez voulu conduire à l'échafaud ceux qui l'ont faite !—contre vous, qui n'avez cessé de provoquer la destruction de Paris !—contre vous, qui avez voulu sauver le tyran !—contre vous, qui avez conspiré avec Dumouriez !—contre vous, qui avez poursuivi avec acharnement les mêmes patriotes dont Dumouriez demandait la tête !—contre vous, dont les vengeances criminelles ont provoqué les mêmes cris d'indignation dont vous voulez faire un crime à ceux qui sont vos victimes ! Eh bien ! ma conclusion c'est le décret d'accusation contre tous les

complices de Dumouriez, et contre tous ceux qui ont été désignés par les pétitionnaires!" The Gironde party were undone; Brissot and twenty others of their leaders were immediately put on their trial, condemned, and executed.

No one at all acquainted with the rhetorical art can deny to these passages merit of the highest order. Above all, no one acquainted with the conduct of debate can doubt that they are precisely the kind of passages most surely calculated to awaken, to gratify, to control an assembly deliberating on the actual affairs of men. The speaker who thus delivered himself was plainly gifted with extraordinary eloquence; and however he may have dwindled down to a frigid, sententious, unimpressive rhetorician upon occasions of an *epideictic* kind, occasions of mere display like the fête in honour of the Supreme Being, or even when in the Convention his personal vanity and desire of oratorical renown made him overdo his part, it is certain that he was capable of excelling in the art; that he did excel on those great occasions which are fitted to call forth its highest displays; and, sure test of excellence, that he rose with the difficulties opposed to him, meeting with superior power the more pressing exigencies of the occasion.

That Robespierre may be tried by this test, we naturally turn to his great speech on the 8th Thermidor, the eve of his downfall; that speech of which

we shall presently see that Cambacérès pronounced a very high panegyric to Napoleon, himself rather disposed to admire the revolutionary Dictator. It is a production of the highest merit, and manifestly elaborated with extraordinary care as well as skill in oratory. The passage respecting the fête in honour of the Supreme Being is, for a popular Assembly, perhaps, too splendid, and might be deemed exaggerated; but the taste of the speech generally is correct and severe. That he had in various passages the masterpieces of the ancient orators in his mind, can admit of no doubt: but there is nothing to be seen like servile imitation; and even in the instance which most reminds us of the original ("Non! nous n'avons pas été trop sévères! J'en atteste la République qui respire! J'en atteste la représentation nationale environnée du respect dû à la représentation d'un grand peuple!"—and ending with "On parle de notre rigueur, et la patrie nous reproche notre faiblesse"), we find nothing nauseous in the imitation, but so fruitful a series of illustrations from the actual state of things, that all notion of pedantic recourse to Demosthenes is put to flight. There is also throughout the speech a tone of deep feeling, which was not natural to the speaker, and probably was awakened by the peculiarity of his unprecedented position, and the extreme singularity of the crisis in which he spoke.

Nor will the inference be in the least altered if

it shall be supposed that these great passages were not quite so extemporaneous as they at first seem to be. It may very possibly be suggested that, in anticipation of some such occasion, he might have been ready with a summary, a powerfully condensed and exquisitely-elaborated summary, of the charges against the party of the Lameths in the one case and of the Gironde in the other. The same may be said of many of the most brilliant and most successful feats of modern eloquence, as it may of all, or nearly all, the more exquisite oratory of the ancients. But the power of skilfully and suddenly adapting to the posture of the moment, and introducing and using naturally on the sudden, the fruit of previous study, is one of the most difficult parts of the orator's art; one which is the latest learnt and the most rarely employed with signal success. An examination of other parts of Robespierre's speeches has led me to the same conclusion to which a consideration of these passages plainly conducts us; and I conceive that his great eminence as a speaker and an occasional writer stands entirely indisputable.

It is known that he owed whatever success we allow him as a speaker to the indefatigable industry of his nature, which overcame the natural impediments of a harsh discordant voice, mean and hateful aspect, slow and hesitating enunciation. His first efforts were complete failures; failures suffi-

cient to dishearten any one not embarked in the quest of distinction with his whole heart, and concentrating all his force in that single pursuit. It was only by slow degrees that he became capable of drawing any attention—became tolerable to his audience. It was also by great labour that he continued to maintain his position as a speaker; and even when his facility had been exceedingly increased by diligent practice and by his eminent position, it was at all times by an effort that he accomplished his purpose. His whole manner was as bad as possible.*

Whether Robespierre originally had formed the design of rising to supreme power, or only began to conceive it after events which he could not foresee might seem to place it within his reach, has sometimes been made a question, and, as it appears to me, very erroneously. No person ever began his public life with such a plan by which to shape his conduct, and Robespierre most certainly only at first thought of making himself a name and a place among men of political eminence, nor dreamt of rising above all others until the events of August and September, 1792, gave him a prospect of such distinction. With the defects by which his progress was obstructed, his personal defects and want of physical as well as moral courage, any hopes of

* I have, from a most able and skilful critic in an exalted station, an accurate account of his voice and manner—no thing can possibly be worse.

overtopping all his more gifted competitors must at first have been wholly out of the question.

But it is a much more difficult matter to determine how far he originally felt any of the Republican enthusiasm, how far he really entertained any of the levelling principles, which inspired and guided the authors of the first Revolution. His nature was singularly alien from any warmth of temper likely to engender enthusiasm; yet he may, from his misanthropic feelings and hatred of all above him, have really acquired something like a zealous antipathy to the established institutions of the country, and something approaching to a fanatical desire for their subversion. It is very possible that at first such feelings may have influenced his conduct; and it is certain that the gratification of his prevailing propensities—first, the thirst of distinction, then the love of power—was quite compatible with indulging in these hostile feelings; nay, that the two indulgences were such as mutually to aid and to pander for each other. The political and religious enthusiasm which some lenient critics of his life have ascribed to him, had assuredly no other existence. It would be very greatly to exalt his character were we to give him credit for anything like fanaticism in the more ordinary acceptance of the term.

That he went fully into the system of proscription, at least for a certain period, cannot be doubted; but there seems every reason to disbelieve the remark

wittily made after Danton's death, "Que Robespierre avait mis la Convention en coupe réglée"—(that he treated the Convention like a forest which was to be cut down successively by fixed portions). On the contrary, it appears unquestionable that he had become really alarmed at the rapid progress of legal execution, and was desirous of stopping, but was embarrassed with the extreme difficulty and even danger of doing so, and thus was placed between two great perils, or two fears, when he found himself, like Macbeth—

"So far in blood steep in,
That turning were as tedious as go o'er."

His absenting himself for six weeks not only from the Convention, but from the Committee of Public Safety, attending the Jacobin Club alone, and preparing that extraordinary speech which he delivered on the day before his downfall, is a fact which cannot fail to operate in his favour; and although he most probably was kept informed, by Couthon and St. Just, of all that passed, he certainly has, in consequence of his absence, considerably less responsibility than his colleagues for the dreadful carnage which attended the close of the Decemviral reign. Napoleon told Mr. O'Meara, whose authority is wholly unimpeachable,* that he had himself seen

* I happen to know facts unknown to Mr. O'Meara when he was writing Napoleon's allusions to those same facts, *c. g.*

letters of Robespierre to his brother, representative of the people with the army of Nice, which proved his determination to bring the Reign of Terror to an end. That he was cut off in the midst of some such plan, which he wanted nerve to execute, is highly probable. That he was condemned without a hearing, and elamoured down by an intrigue of his colleagues Billaud and Collot, whose destruction he had planned, appears to be quite certain. When Cambacérès, an acute observer, and a perfectly candid witness, was asked his opinion of the 9th Thermidor by Napoleon, whose estimate of Robespierre was not unfavourable, he said, “C’était un procès jugé, mais non plaidé.” And he added, that the speech of the day before, which began the struggle, was “filled with the greatest beauties” (*tout rempli des plus grandes beautés*). To his habitual and constitutional want of courage it seems clear that the tyrant’s fall must be ascribed. His heart failed not in the Convention when he vainly strove to be heard, and ended by exclaiming, “Encore une fois! Veux tu m’entendre, Président d’assassins?” But the moment was now past for resisting the plot of his adversaries, and saving himself by destroying them. He had not in time taken his line, which was to sacrifice Billaud and Collot, and perhaps Tallien; and then at once to close the Secret Negotiations with Spain in 1806; and thus those allusions were to him unintelligible

Reign of Terror and abolish the Revolutionary Tribunal. This course required a determination of purpose and a boldness of execution which were foreign to his mean nature, happily for the instruction of mankind ; because had he, like Sylla, survived the bloody tyranny in which he had ruled, and, much more, had he laid down the rod, like the champion of the Roman aristocracy, the world, ever prone to judge by the event, and to esteem more highly them that fail not, would have held a divided opinion, if not pronounced a lenient judgment upon one of the most execrable and most despicable characters recorded in the annals of our race.

In fine, that he was, beyond most men that ever lived, hateful, selfish, unprincipled, cruel, unscrupulous, is undeniable. That he was not the worst of the Jacobin group may also be without hesitation affirmed. Collot d'Herbois was probably worse ; Billaud Varennes certainly, of whom it was said by Garat, "*Il fauche dans les têtes, comme un autre dans les prés*"—(he mows down heads as another would grass). But neither of these men had the same fixity of purpose, and both were inferior to him in speech. Both, however, and indeed all the revolutionary chiefs, were his superiors in the one great quality of courage ; and while his want of boldness, his abject poverty of spirit, made him as despicable as he was odious, we are left in amazement at his achieving the place which he filled,

without the requisite most essential to success in times of trouble, and to regard as his distinguishing but pitiful characteristic the circumstance which leaves the deepest impression upon those who contemplate his story, and in which he is to be separated from the common herd of usurpers, that his cowardly nature did not prevent him from gaining the prize which, in all other instances, has been yielded to a daring spirit.

Such was Robespierre—a name at which all men still shudder. Reader, think not that this spectacle has been exhibited by Providence for no purpose, and without any use! It may serve as a warning against giving way to our scorn of creatures that seem harmless because of the disproportion between their mischievous propensities and their powers to injure, and against suffering them to breathe and to crawl till they begin to ascend into regions where they may be more noxious than in their congenial dunghill or native dust! No one who has cast away all regard to principle, and is callous to all humane feelings, can be safely regarded as innocuous, merely because, in addition to other defects, he has also the despicable weakness of being pusillanimous and vile.

DANTON.



A MAN of Robespierre's character, and with his great defects as a revolutionary chief, may be able to raise himself in troublous times to great eminence, and possibly even to usurp supreme power, but he never can take the lead in bringing great changes about ; he never can be a maker of the revolutions by which he may however profit. His rise to distinction and command may be gained by perseverance, by self-denial, by extreme circumspection, by having no scruples to interfere with his schemes, no conscience to embarrass, no feelings to scare him ; above all, by taking advantage of circumstances, and turning each occurrence that happens to his account. These qualities and this policy may even enable him to retain the power which they have enabled him to grasp ; but another nature and other endowments are required, and must be added to these, in order to form a man fitted for raising the tempest, and directing its fury against the established order of things. Above all, boldness, the daring soul, the callous nerves, the mind

inaccessible to fear, and impervious to the mere calculations of personal prudence, almost a blindness sealing his eyes against the perception of consequences as well to himself as to others, is the requisite of his nature who would overturn an ancient system of polity, and substitute a novel regimen in its place. For this Robespierre was wholly unfit; and if any man can more than another be termed the author of the French Revolution, it is Danton, who possessed these requisites in perfection.

There can hardly a greater contrast be found between two individuals than that which this remarkable person presented in all respects to Robespierre. His nature was dauntless; his temper mild and frank; his disposition sociable; naturally rather kind and merciful, his feelings were only blunted to scenes of cruelty by his enthusiasm, which was easily kindled in favour of any great object; and even when he had plunged into bloodshed, none of the chiefs who directed those sad proceedings ever saved so many victims from the tempest of destruction which their machinations had let loose. Nor was there anything paltry and mean in his conduct on these occasions, either as to the slaughters which he encouraged or the lives which he saved. No one has ever charged him with sacrificing any to personal animosity, like Robespierre and Collot d'Herbois, whose adversaries

fell before the Revolutionary Tribunal, or those against whom offended vanity made them bear a spite ; and it is certain that he used his influence in procuring the escape of many who had proved his personal enemies. His retreat to Arcis-sur-Aube, after his refusal to enter the Committee of Public Safety, and finally his self-sacrifice by protesting against the sanguinary course of that terrible power, leave no doubt whatever resting upon his general superiority in character and in feelings to almost all the other chiefs.

His natural endowments were great for any part in public life, whether at the bar or in the senate, or even in war : for the part of a revolutionary leader they were of the highest order. A courage which nothing could quell ; a quickness of perception at once and clearly to perceive his own opportunity, and his adversary's error ; singular fertility of resources, with the power of sudden change in his course, and adaptation to varied circumstances ; a natural eloquence springing from the true source of all eloquence—warm feelings, fruitful imagination, powerful reason, the qualities that distinguish it from the mere rhetorician's art,—but an eloquence hardy, caustic, masculine ; a mighty frame of body ;* a voice overpowering all resistance ;

* It was his own expression, "*La Nature m'a donné en partage les forces athlétiques et la physiognomie âpre de la Liberté.*" (Nature has given me for my portion the athletic

these were the grand qualities which Danton brought to the prodigious struggle in which he was engaged ; and ambition and enthusiasm could, for the moment, deaden within him those kindlier feelings which would have impeded or encumbered his progress to eminence and to power. That he was extremely zealous for the great change which he so essentially promoted, cannot admit of a doubt ; and there is no reason whatever for asserting that his ambition, or any personal motive, overtopped his honest though exaggerated enthusiasm. The zeal of St. Just and Camille Desmoulins was, in all probability, as sincere as Danton's ; but they, especially St. Just, suffered personal feelings to interfere with it, and control their conduct to a very much greater extent ; and their memory, especially St. Just's, is exposed to far more reproach for their conduct in the bloody scenes to which the Revolution gave birth.

The speeches of Danton were marked by a fire, an animation, very different from anything that we find in those of Robespierre, and the other leaders of the Revolution, except perhaps Isnard, the most ardent of them all. In Danton's eloquence there appears no preparation, no study, nothing got up for mere effect. We have the whole heart of the man poured forth ; and accordingly he rises upon strength and harsh expression of Freedom.) He was marked with the small-pox like Robespierre, but had a masculine countenance, broad nostrils, forward lips, and a bold air wholly unlike his.

any incidental interruption, and is never confounded by any tumult or any attack. In one particular, as might be expected from his nature, he stands single among the great speakers of either France or England—the shortness of his speeches. They are, indeed, harangues prompted by the occasion; and we never lose the man of action in the orator. If we were to look for a specimen of his manner, perhaps none could be found better or more characteristic than his reply to the attack made upon him by Lasource, whom the Gironde put forward to charge him with his known partiality for Dumouriez. Danton was then the recognised leader of the Mountain; and the fierce struggle between that party and the Gironde having begun, the latter deemed it a great advantage to connect their adversaries, through him, with Dumouriez, whose treason was now avowed. The success of Danton's defence was complete, and paved the way for the subsequent denunciation of the Gironde. The speech is full of extempore bursts which have great merit, and produced an extraordinary impression. It may suffice to give the passage in which he denounced the Gironde. It follows his sudden retort on the cry that he was playing with Dumouriez the part of Cromwell. The success of that retort appears to have suggested and sustained the denunciation:—

“Si donc ce n'est que le sentiment profond de vos devoirs qui a dicté son arrêt de mort (Louis

XVI.) ; si vous avez cru sauver le peuple et faire en cela ce que la nation avait droit d'attendre de ses mandataires : ralliez-vous, vous qui avez prononcé l'arrêt du tyran, contre les lâches (*turning to the right—the Gironde*) qui ont voulu le sauver ; serrez-vous, appelez le peuple à se réunir en armes contre les ennemis du dehors, et écraser ceux du dedans ; confondez par la vigueur et l'immobilité de votre caractère tous les scélérats, tous les aristocrates, tous les modérés, tous ceux qui vous ont calomniés dans les départemens. Plus de composition avec eux ! (*Extraordinary applause, in which the galleries joined.*) Reconnaissez-le tous, vous qui n'avez jamais sù tirer de votre situation politique dans la nation le parti que vous auriez pu en tirer, qu'enfin justice vous soit rendue. Vous voyez par la situation où je me trouve en ce moment la nécessité où vous êtes d'être fermes, et déclarer la guerre à tous vos ennemis, quels qu'ils soient. (*Renewed applause.*) Il faut former un phalange indomptable. Ce n'est pas vous, puisque vous aimez les sociétés populaires et le peuple ; ce n'est pas vous qui voudrez un roi. (*More shouts ; loud cries of Non ! non ! from the great majority of the Convention.*) C'est à vous à en ôter l'idée à ceux qui ont machiné pour conserver l'ancien tyran. Je marche à la république — marchons-y de concert : nous verrons qui de nous ou de nos detracteurs atteindra le but.”*

*“ If, then, it be the profound sense of duty which dic-

The great power of this declamation is incontestable. His concluding sentence savoured of the exaggeration and defective taste which marked many of his harangues :—

“ Je me suis retranché dans la citadelle de la raison ; j'en sortirai avec le canon de la vérité ; et je pulvériserai les scélérats qui ont voulu m'accuser.”*

tated the condemnation of the King—if you conceived that you thereby saved the people, and thus performed the service which the country had a right to expect from its representatives—rally, you who pronounced the tyrant's doom ; rally round me against the cowards who would have spared him ; close your ranks ; call the people to assemble in arms against the enemy without, and to crush the enemy within ; confound, by the vigour and steadfastness of your character, all the wretches, all the aristocrats, all the moderates, all those who have slandered you in the provinces. No more compromise with them ! (*Immense applause, in which the galleries joined.*) Proclaim this, you who have never made your political position available to you as it ought to be, and let justice at length be done you ! You perceive, by the situation in which I at this moment stand, how necessary it is that you should be firm, and declare war on all your enemies, be they who they may. (*Renewed applause.*) You must form an indomitable phalanx. It is not you, who love the clubs and the people, that desire a King. (*Loud cries of 'No ! No !'*) It is your part to root out such an idea from such as have contrived to save the former tyrant. For me, I march onwards to a republic ; let us all join in the advance ; we shall soon see which gains his object—we or our slanderers !”

* “ I have entrenched myself in the citadel of reason ; I

Such violent metaphors of a vulgar class Danton could venture upon, from his thundering voice and overpowering action. In another they would have excited the ridicule from which those physical attributes rescued them in him.

A charge of corruption has often been brought against Danton, but upon very inadequate grounds. The assertion of Royalist partisans that he had stipulated for money, and the statement of one that he knew of its payment, and had seen the receipt (as if a receipt could have passed), can signify really nothing, when put in contrast with the known facts of his living, throughout his short public career, in narrow circumstances, and of his family being left so destitute that his sons are at this day leading the lives of peasants, or, at most, of humble yeomen, and cultivating for their support a small paternal farm in his native parish. The difference between his habits and those of the other great leaders gave rise to the rumours against his purity. He was almost the only one whose life was not strictly ascetic. Without being a debauched man, he indulged in sensual pleasures far more than common. I shall sally forth with the artillery of truth; and I shall crumble to dust the villains who have presumed to accuse me."

It must be remarked that such passages as the former, in all languages, are hardly possible to translate; for they are more or less conversational in their diction, and exceedingly idiomatic. The fustian of the last extract is more easy to render.

ported with the rigid republican character ; and this formed one of the charges which, often repeated at a time when a fanatical republicanism had engendered a puritan morality, enabled Robespierre, himself above all suspicion of the kind, to work his downfall.*

The patriarchs of the Revolution, who till late survived, and whom I knew, such as M. Lakanal, always held Danton to be identified with the Revolution, and its principal leader. In fact, the 10th of August, which overthrew the monarchy, was his peculiar work. He prepared the movement, headed the body of his section (the Cordeliers) in their march first through the Assembly, demanding, with threats of instant violence, the King's deposition, then attacking the palace to enforce their requisition. When, soon after that memorable day, the Prussians were advancing upon Paris, and in the general consternation the Assembly was resolved to retreat behind the Loire, he alone retained his imperturbable presence of mind, and prevented a movement which must have proved fatal, because it would have delivered over Paris to the Royalists and the allied armies. The darkest page in his history, however, swiftly follows his greatest glory. He

* In a former volume I had expressed myself respecting Danton with a harshness which a more minute study of his conduct and character makes me regret.

was Minister of Justice during the dreadful massacres of September, and he was very far from exerting his power to protect the wretched victims of mob fury. On that occasion was pronounced his famous speech already cited on the necessity of bold measures—a speech by which he was long known, and will be long remembered, throughout all Europe. Other traits of his vehement nature are still recorded. When interrogated at his trial, his answer was, “*Je m’appelle Danton ; mon séjour sera bientôt le néant ; mon nom vivra dans le panthéon de l’histoire.*” When taking leave of his young and fair wife, and for a moment melted to the use of some such expressions as, “*Oh, ma bien aimée ! faut-il que je te quitte ?*”—suddenly recovering himself, he exclaimed, “*Danton, point de faiblesse ! Allons en avant !*”—And the same bold front was maintained to the end. His murder was the knell of Robespierre’s fate ; and while choked with rage on his own accusation, and unable to make himself heard, a voice exclaimed, “*C’est le sang de Danton qui t’étouffe !*” (It is the blood of Danton that chokes you !) But it must be admitted to have been a fine, a just, and an impressive lesson which, goaded by the taunt, the tyrant, collecting his exhausted strength for a last effort, delivered to his real accomplices, the pusillanimous creatures who had not dared to raise a hand, or even a voice, against Danton’s murder—

“ Lâches ! que ne le défendiez-vous donc ? ” (Cowards ! then why did you not defend him ?) On the scaffold, where Danton retained his courage and proud self-possession to the last, the executioner cruelly and foolishly prevented him from embracing, for the last time, his friend Héroult de Seychelles, a man of unsullied character, great acquirements, and high eminence at the bar, as well as of noble blood :* “ Fool ! ” exclaimed Danton indignantly, and with the bitter smile of scorn that often marked his features, “ Fool ! not to see that our heads must in a few seconds meet in that basket ! ”

The fall of Danton and of his faithful adherent Camille has ever been regarded as one of the most surprising events in the Revolution. His habitual boldness, and the promptitude with which he always took and pursued his course, seems for the moment to have forsaken him ; else surely he could have anticipated the attack of the Committee, which was fully known before-hand. The Triumvirate had become generally the objects of hatred and of dread. The Gironde, though broken and dispersed, and hostile to Danton, as well as to the other partisans of the Mountain, were the last men to approve the course which had been followed since the de-

* He was nephew of Madame de Polignac, favourite and confidante of the Queen, through whose influence he had been appointed to a high legal situation.

struction of their leaders, and were anything but reconciled to mob government, which they had always detested and scorned, by the desperate excesses to which it had led. On the scattered fragments of that once powerful party, then, he might well have relied. Even if he was ignorant of the impatience which Tallien, Bourdon de l'Oise, Legendre, and others, felt under the Triumviral domination, and which the two former had not yet perhaps disclosed, he never could have omitted the consideration that some of them, especially Legendre, had before, and prematurely, given vent to their hostile feelings towards Robespierre, and were therefore sure to display them still more decidedly now that he was so much less powerful, and had so much more richly earned their aversion. As for the charges against Danton, they were absolutely intangible: the speech of Robespierre, and report of St. Just, presented nothing like substantial grounds of accusation, even admitting all they alleged to be proved. Their declamation was vague and puerile, asserting no offence, but confined to general vituperation; as that he abandoned the public in times of crisis, partook of Brissot's calm and liberticide opinions, quenched the fury of true patriots, magnified his own worth and that of his adherents: or flimsy and broad allegations of things wholly incapable of proof; as that all Europe was convinced of

Danton and Lacroix having stipulated for royalty, and that he had always been friendly towards Dumouriez, Mirabeau, and d'Orléans. The proposition of Legendre, to hear him before decreeing his prosecution, was rejected by acclamation; and the report of St. Just against him, though, by a refinement of injustice, as well as an excess of false rhetoric, addressed to him in one continued apostrophe of general abuse an hour long, was delivered and adopted in his absence, while he was buried in the dungeons of the state prison. The Revolutionary Tribunal, for erecting which he asked pardon of God and man, having nothing like a specific charge before them, much less any evidence to convict, were daunted by his eloquence and his courage, which were beginning to make an impression upon the public mind, when the Committee sent St. Just down to the Convention with a second report, alleging a new conspiracy, called the *Conspiration des Prisons*—an alleged design of Danton and his party, then in custody, to rush out of the dungeons, and massacre the Committee, the Jacobin Club, and the patriots in the Convention; liberate young Capet, that is, Louis XVII., and place him in Danton's hands. Upon this most clumsy fabrication, every word of which refuted itself, it was at once decreed that the tribunal should proceed summarily, and prevent any one of the accused being heard who should resist

or insult the national justice—that is, who should persist in asserting his innocence.* Sentence and execution immediately followed.

These circumstances make it apparent that Danton's supineness in providing for his own safety by attacking the Committee first, must have proceeded from the ascendant which the Triumvirate had gained over his mind. Originally he had a mean opinion of Robespierre, holding him void of the qualities which a revolutionary crisis demands. "Cet homme-là [was his phrase] ne saurait pas cuire des œufs durs"—(that man is incapable of boiling eggs hard). But this opinion was afterwards so completely changed, that he was used to say, "Tout va bien tant qu'on dira Robespierre et Danton; mais malheur à moi si on dit jamais Danton et Robespierre"—(all will go well as long as men say "Robespierre and Danton;" but woe be to me if ever they should say "Danton and Robespierre"). Possibly he became sensible to the power of Robespierre's character, for ever persisting in extreme courses, and plunging onwards beyond any one, with a perfect absence of all scruples in his remorseless career. But his dread of such a conflict as these words contemplate was assuredly much augmented by the feeling that the match must prove most unequal between his own

* This proceeding, of stopping the accused's mouth when on his trial, was termed putting a person *hors des débats*.

honesty and openness, and the practised duplicity of the most dark, the most crafty of human beings.

The impression thus become habitual on his mind, and which made him so distrustful of himself in a combat with an adversary like the rattlesnake, at once terrible and despicable, whose rattle gives warning of the neighbouring peril, may go far to account for his avoiding the strife till all precaution was too late to save him. But we must also take into our account the other habitual feeling, so often destructive of revolutionary nerves; the awe in which the children of convulsion, like the practisers of the dark art, stand of the spirit they have themselves conjured up; their instinctive feeling of the agonistic throes which they have excited in the mass of the community, and armed with such resistless energy. The Committee, though both opposed and divided against itself, still presented to the country the front of the existing supreme power in the state; it was the sovereign *de facto*, and retained as such all those preternatural attributes that "do hedge in" monarchs even when tottering to their fall: it therefore impressed the children of popular change with the awe which they instinctively feel towards the Sovereign People. Hence Danton, viewing in Robespierre the personification of the multitude, could not at once make up his mind to fly in the face of this dread power; and his hesitation

enabled his adversaries to begin the mortal fray, and win their last victory. Plainly, it was a strife in which the party that began was sure to carry the day.

The history of Danton, as well as that of Robespierre, both those passages wherein they were jointly successful, and those in which one fell beneath the power and the arts—the combined force and fraud—of the other, is well calculated to impress upon our minds that, in the great affairs of the world, especially in the revolutions which change its condition, the one thing needful is a sustained determination of character; a mind firm, persevering, inflexible, incapable of bending to the will of another, and ever controlling circumstances, not yielding to them. A quick perception of opportunities, a prompt use of them, is of infinite advantage; an indomitable boldness in danger is all but necessary: nevertheless Robespierre's career shows that it is not quite indispensable; while Danton's is a proof that a revolutionary chief may possess it habitually, and may yet be destroyed by a momentary loss of nerve, or a disposition to take the law from others, or an inopportune hesitation and faltering in recurring to extreme measures. But the history of all these celebrated men shows that steady, unflinching, unscrupulous perseverance—the fixed and vehement will—is altogether essential to success. “*Quod vult, id valde vult,*”

said one great man formerly of another, to whom it applied less strikingly than to himself, though he was fated to experience in his own person that it was far from being inapplicable to him of whom he said it. It was the saying of Julius Cæsar respecting Junius Brutus, and conveyed in a letter to one who, celebrated, and learned, and virtuous as he was, and capable of exerting both boldness and firmness upon occasion, was yet, of all the great men that have made their names illustrious, the one who could the least claim the same habitual character for himself. Marcus Tullius could never have risen to eminence in the Revolution of France, any more than he could have mingled in the scenes which disgracefully distinguished* it from the troubles of Rome.

* The only respect, perhaps, in which this can justly be asserted is the profanation of judicial forms, and the deliberate course of misrule pursued in France by the leaders, and submitted to by the people. The massacres of Marius and Sylla were far more sanguinary, but they were the sudden and passing effects of power—mere acts of military execution. The scene in France lasted much above a year.

CAMILLE DESMOULINS.—ST. JUST.

THE great leaders whom we have been contemplating had each a trusty and devoted follower, Danton in Camille, and Robespierre in St. Just; and these in some sort resembled their chiefs, except only that St. Just was more enthusiastic than Robespierre, and was endowed with perfect courage, both physical and moral.

Camille had long before the Revolution ardently embraced republican opinions, and only waited with impatience for an opportunity of carrying them into effective operation. He was a person of good education, and a writer of great ability. His works are, excepting the pamphlets of Sièyes, the only ones, perhaps, of that countless progeny with which the revolutionary press swarmed, that have retained any celebrity. The very names of the others have perished, while the periodical work of Camille, the *Vieux Cordelier*, is still read and admired. This exemption from the common lot of his contemporary writers, he owes not merely to the remarkable crisis in which his letters appeared,

the beginning of general disgust and alarm at the sanguinary reign of the Triumvirate; these pieces are exceedingly well written, with great vigour of thought, much happy classical allusion, and in a style far more pure than the ordinary herd of those employed who pandered for the multitude.

But the merit of Camille rises very much above any literary fame which writers can earn, or the public voice can bestow. He appears ever to have been a friend to milder measures than suited the taste of the times, and to have entirely agreed with Danton in his virtuous resistance to the reign of blood. At the very beginning of the Revolution he had contributed mainly to the great event which launched it,—the attack upon the Bastille. He harangued the people, and then led them on, holding two loaded pistols in his hands. He also joined Danton in the struggle which the Mountain made against the Gironde, and is answerable for a large share in the proscription of that party, firmly believing, as Danton did, that their views were not purely revolutionary, and that their course must lead to a restoration of the monarchy. He was at first, too, a promoter of mob proceedings and the mobs that regulated them, his nickname being the “*Procureur Général de la Lanterne*” (*Attorney-General of the Lamp-post*). But there ended his share in the bloody tragedy which followed; and he regarded with insurmountable aversion the

whole proceedings of the Triumvirate. Nevertheless, Robespierre, who had resolved upon his destruction because of his intimate connexion with Danton, so far entered into his views of relaxing the speed of the proscriptions as to approve of the earlier numbers of the *Vieux Cordelier*, which he revised and corrected before their publication. There is even good reason for believing that Camille might have escaped the proscription which involved Danton and his party, through the disposition of Robespierre not having been very unfavourable to him, because it seems certain that his doctrine in favour of returning to more moderate courses was not so much dreaded by that terrible chief as by others, especially St. Just. But a sarcastic expression in which he indulged at the expense of that vain and remorseless fanatic sealed his doom. St. Just was always puffed up with his sense of self-importance, and showed this so plainly in his demeanour that Camille said he “carried his head like the holy sacrament” (*le Saint Sacrement*)—“and I,” said St. Just, on the sneer being reported to him, which has the merit of giving a very picturesque description of the subject, “and I will make him carry his head like St. Denis,” alluding to the legend of that saint having walked from Paris to his grave carrying his head under his arm.

Camille met death with perfect boldness, though

his indignation at the gross perfidy and crying injustice to which he was sacrificed enraged him so as to make his demeanour less calm than his great courage would have prescribed, or than his friend Hérault de Seychelles desired. “Montrons, mon ami,” said he, “que nous savons mourir” (let us show, my friend, that we know how to die).

It is a remarkable circumstance in the history of Camille, that he was wholly precluded by an incurable hesitation from speaking in public, and consequently could take no part in debate. Nothing can show more conclusively than the station to which he rose in the annals of the Revolution, that oratory, mere speaking, bore a far more inconsiderable part in the conduct of affairs than it usually does in the administration of popular governments. The debates of the Convention were for the most part short, full of quick and sudden allusions, loaded with personalities and abounding in appeals to the popular feelings, but with few long or elaborate speeches. The principal pains appear to have been bestowed upon the reports of the Committees, which were eagerly listened to and produced a great effect, by the importance of their subjects and the authority of the bodies from whom they proceeded. In general, the debates resembled more the practical discussions of men engaged in action than the declamations

or the arguments of debaters. Thus oratory was of less avail than might have been expected in the action of so popular a government. It should seem that such a government must be settled before eloquence can have its full scope. "*Pacis comes, otiique socia, et jam bene constitutæ reipublicæ alumna eloquentia.*" (*Cic.*) Other qualities raise a man above his compeers while the popular tempest rages. A fixed purpose, a steady pursuit of one object, an assurance given to the people that he may be relied upon at all times and to every extent, a constant security against all wavering, a certainty that no circumstances in his conduct will ever leave anything to explain or account for, nay, a persuasion that nothing unexpected by those whose confidence his past life has gained will ever be done, so as to excite surprise and make men exclaim, "Who could have thought it? This from him! Then what next?"—these are the qualities which far outweigh all genius for debate in the troublous times that try men's souls, fill all minds with anxiety, and open the door to general suspicion.

Without any gifts of wealth or of station, without even the common faculty of expressing himself in public, with no professional or other station to sustain him, a man necessarily unknown, at first altogether, and afterwards only known by his firm will, his devotion to republican principles, and his steady adhesion to one party and one chief, Camille

became one of the leading men in the Convention and the State, and had gained this high position before he was known as a writer of singular powers; for his celebrated letters were only produced towards the very close of his life. It was, no doubt, an additional cause of his elevation, and probably first recommended him to the public favour which he had so little means of improving, that he began early to support the revolutionary movement, and had, before the great events of 1789, declared himself a friend of republican principles. So it was with Couthon, a provincial advocate in Auvergne, and as unfitted for action by a paralytic stroke, which deprived him of the use of his limbs, as Camille was by the stutter which deprived him of the use of his tongue. Yet Couthon formed the third of the famous Triumvirate which exercised for above a year—an age in revolutionary times—the dictatorship of France. He is represented as a person of an engaging aspect and noble presence, notwithstanding the grievous infirmity with which he was stricken. When any measures of peculiar severity were to be propounded, he was always chosen by the Committee to bring them forward, and he was remarkable for uttering the most atrocious and pitiless sentiments in a tone and with a manner the most affectionate and tender. Like most of his colleagues, he practised on great occasions some of those strokes for stage effect that

so powerfully affect the minds of the multitude, and of the French more than perhaps any other, being confounded with the sublime, and bordering generally upon the ludicrous. When the destruction of Lyons had been decreed, he had himself carried to the great place, and gave the signal for the work of demolition with a hammer, and the command or sentence in these words, “Je te condamne à être démolie au nom de la loi” (I condemn thee to destruction in the name of the law).

The nature of the debates in the Convention has been already adverted to. They were constantly interrupted by the utmost violence of individuals and parties, so as to set at nought all attempts of the President to keep any semblance of order. The scene was often one of perfect confusion, in which his bell tolled in vain, and his hat was in vain put on, and he occasionally left the chair in despair of maintaining even the outward appearance of order. The two cardinal points upon which hinge the whole regularity and independence of the proceedings in our popular assembly were wholly wanting in the French Convention—the chair was not supported and deferred to by common consent as representing the majority of the whole body, and the strangers admitted to the galleries (*tribunes*) were not there upon mere sufferance, ready to be instantly excluded if they

in the least particular presumed to interfere with the proceedings.

The licence and the personalities in which the members were wont to indulge with levity and coarse humour formed a strange and even appalling contrast to the dreadful work in which they were engaged.—Legendre was a butcher, and that he had imported the habits of his trade into his political sphere appears plainly enough from his proposition to have the King's body cut into eighty-three portions, and distributed among the several departments. His calling was not unfrequently brought up against him in the Convention—"Tais-toi, massacreur de bœufs!" said one whom he was denouncing. "C'est que j'en ai assommé qui avoient plus d'esprit que toi!" was the butcher's immediate reply.—Another being on his defence against a motion for a decree of accusation to put him on his trial, Legendre then presiding said, "Décrète qu'il soit mis"—"Décrète," said the other, interrupting him, "décrète que je suis bœuf, et tu m'assommeras toi-même."—Such passages remind one of the grotesque humours of the fiends in 'Paradise Lost,' whose scoffing raillery in their "gamesome mood" Milton has so admirably painted, to the extreme displeasure, no doubt, of his prudish critic, in whose estimation this is by "far the most exceptionable passage of the whole poem."*

* Addison, 'Spectator,' No. 279. The dialogue of mutual

The talent which Camille displayed as a writer has been alluded to ; it might not appear to be of the highest order were we considering the merit of one who was a mere author. But he also played a great part among the actors in the scenes of the time ; and of those he stands certainly highest as a master of composition. There is nothing vile or low in his taste, like that most base style of extravagant figure and indecent and even obscene allusion which disgusts us in the abominable writings of the Héberts and the Marats ; nor are our feelings shocked by anything of the same ferocity which reigned through their constant appeals to the brutal passions of the savage mob. On the contrary, the allusions are chiefly classical, the sentiments generally humane, the diction refined. Seven papers only of his most celebrated work, '*Le Vieux Cordelier*,' appeared before his moderate counsels hurried him to the scaffold. But from one of these a passage may be selected for a fair sample of his powers as a writer. It is his appeal to the Convention, awakening their courage, and urging them to condemn the danger of stemming the ultra-revolutionary torrent ; and it must be allowed that the topic of illustration is happily chosen, as it is certainly handled with ability :—

sarcasm between Adamo and Sinon in Dante's '*Inferno*,' would have given the same offence to the critic ; and the poet seems as if conscious of the offence he was offering to squeamish persons when he makes Virgil chide his pupil for listening to such ribaldry.

“Eh quoi ! lorsque tous les jours les douze cent mille soldats du peuple Français affrontent les redoutes hérissées de batteries les plus meurtrières, et volent de victoires en victoires, nous, députés à la Convention, nous, qui ne pouvons jamais tomber, comme le soldat, dans l’obscurité de la nuit, fusillé dans les ténèbres, et sans témoins de sa valeur ; nous, dont la mort soufferte pour la liberté ne peut être que glorieuse, solennelle, et en présence de la nation entière, de l’Europe, et de la postérité, serions-nous plus lâches que nos soldats ? Craignons-nous de nous exposer, de regarder Bouchotte* en face ? N’oserons-nous braver la grande colère du Père Duchesne,† pour remporter aussi la victoire que le peuple Français attend de nous, la victoire sur les ultra-révolutionnaires comme sur les contre-révolutionnaires ; la victoire sur tous les intrigans, tous les fripons, tous les ambitieux, tous les ennemis du bien public ? ”‡

* A Terrorist general of the Hébert faction.

† The name of Hébert’s infamous journal.

‡ “What ! While the twelve hundred thousand soldiers of the French people each day face the redoubts bristling with the most destructive batteries, and fly from victory to victory, shall we—we, the representatives of that people in the Convention, we, who cannot fall, like soldiers, in the obscurity of night, killed in the dark, and with no witness of our valour—we, whose death for liberty cannot but be glorious, solemn, in the presence of the whole nation, of Europe, and of posterity—shall *we* be more timid than our troops ? Shall we be afraid of exposing ourselves, of

St. Just was in every point of view a person very inferior to either Danton or Camille. Except his unhesitating audacity, derived from a strong enthusiasm, which nothing could quell, and which stopped at nothing, and a considerable facility of speech, but with no power of argument or gift of eloquence, he really appears to have possessed no quality to entitle him to the high place after which he aspired, and which he almost immediately gained at a very early age, for he was only twenty-one years old when the Revolution broke out, and barely twenty-five when he became a member of the Committee of Public Safety. He was a young man of a fine aspect, and even engaging countenance; and his sincere republican fanaticism was unquestionable. But this affords so little palliation of his conduct, that it rather makes him appear as so much the more dangerous, and it undoubtedly made him the more mischievous. His youth and spirit, always when combined a favourite with the multitude, gave him a sway which made Robespierre at once perceive the importance of attaching him to himself. He succeeded, for St. Just kept steadily by his patron to the end, and shared facing Bouchotte? Shall we not dare to brave the fury of Père Duchesne, in order to win the victory which the people of France is expecting at our hands; a victory over ultra-revolutionists as well as counter-revolutionists, a victory over all the intriguers, all the knaves, all the ambitious, all the enemies of the country?"

the fate which his violent counsels, far outstripping those of his leader, would, if followed, possibly have postponed, if not prevented.

It must be added that with his fanaticism was mixed up the most selfish vanity and irritable impatience of whatever wounded it. The cold-blooded murder of Camille for a jest uttered at his expense, is one of the most disgusting atrocities in the whole Reign of Terror, and could only have been perpetrated by a man whose whole feelings were absorbed in self-esteem, and to whom carnage was familiar or indifferent, if not absolutely grateful. He had shown the same proneness to shed blood when employed as the Committee's emissary and representative with the armies. He is said to have caused fifty officers to be shot in one day, when he was with the Army of the North; and when the siege of Charleroi went on less rapidly than his impatience and ignorant presumption desired, he put a colonel of artillery to death without remorse.

He valued himself, among other accomplishments, on his talent for composition; but his writings, like his speeches, were a wretched patchwork of phrases from Rousseau, Diderot, and other writers of the modern school, strung together with sounding generalities about equality, the people, and the rights of man. To give samples of the rant, half-cold declamation, half-mawkish senti-

mentality, which composed his speeches would be unprofitable. Like all such authors, he mistook exclamation and apostrophe for pathos. This passage on the King's trial is far from being an unfair specimen of his manner; and nothing can be much worse. After alluding to Louis XVI.'s known kindness of disposition and his charities, he breaks out into this rhapsody:—

“Louis outrageait la vertu; à qui paraîtra-t-elle désormais innocente? Ainsi donc, âmes sensibles, si vous aimez le peuple, si vous vous attendrissez sur son sort, on vous évitera avec horreur; la fausseté d'un roi qui travestissait le sentiment ne permettrait plus de vous croire; on rougira de paraître sensible.”*

Hardly any of the revolutionary chiefs showed less shining talents than St. Just; none proved themselves more unscrupulous in the pursuit of victory; none more careless of the crimes they instigated or perpetrated. His maxim that “no one can rule in France innocently” (*on ne règne pas innocemment en France*), if followed up to its practical consequences, was the direct sanction

* “Louis outraged virtue: to whom will she hereafter appear innocent? Thus, ye feeling hearts, if you love the people, if you are melted at seeing their lot, you will be shunned with horror; the falsehood of a king who masked himself in sentiment will not suffer you to gain credit for your professions. Men will henceforth blush to appear tender-hearted.”

of every enormity that ambition could commit in chace of dominion.

It should seem as if, in casting their several parts, the Decemvirs of the Committee well understood each other's propensities, if not their several capacities. While the war-department was committed to Carnôt, who by common consent was the most singularly fitted to conduct it, others might be less qualified for their departments than Carnôt was for his, but all were apparently chosen with a view at least to their several tastes, if not to their genius. The care of the police and of whatever measures were required for maintaining or exciting the popular feelings, was given to Robespierre; the proposal of violent proceedings to the mild-spoken and, from his infirmities, inoffensive Couthon; while the reports to the Convention fell upon Barrère, whose want of determined or distinct principles and character, as well as his easy eloquence, seemed peculiarly to fit him for this task; and to the suspicious, implacable St. Just belonged the watching and denunciation of political offenders, including of course the extensive system of spy-craft (*espionnage*) kept in perpetual activity. It should seem, however, as if Robespierre himself employed spies apart from his colleagues. Curious reports of these agents were found among his papers, and have been made public. The circumstances seized upon by the watchful eyes of those vile wretches

are all of the most trivial nature, and demonstrate the readiness with which everything and anything becomes matter of charge under such a regimen. Of one deputy (Bourdon de l'Oise) it is said, after tracing his whole motions during the day, that on going to the Convention he yawned repeatedly while reports were read of matters advantageous to the state. (*Papiers Inédits*, vol. i. p. 370.) Of another (Thuriot) it is told, that some one upon quitting him said, "Ne tarde pas" (make haste). (*Ib.* p. 371.) Of Legendre it is said, after a minute account of all the insignificant things he did during the morning, that he "conversed mysteriously with some one, and that both appeared to avoid the crowd." (*Ib.* p. 367.)

It is not to be forgotten, in considering the relative demerits of the Triumvirate, that by far the most sanguinary period of the Reign of Terror was the last month of its duration, as we have already seen; and during the whole of that period Robespierre absented himself from the Committee as well as the Convention. It is true that he was engaged in supporting possibly the system, certainly his own party in it, at the Jacobin Club, and with the municipality of Paris; and he most probably was aware of all that passed among his colleagues in his absence. But the details at least of these wholesale murders, the *fournées* (or batches), as they were quaintly termed, were left to the un-

flinching hands of the pitiless Couthon and the ferocious St. Just. Nor is it to be kept out of view that this detestable youth urged upon the tyrant a measure from which even his savage nature recoiled (if indeed it be not that his nerves gave way at the prospect), a measure of sweeping extermination, which would have left all former atrocities excluded from their due share of execration with aftertimes, and must have stayed, possibly might have averted, the fate of the Dictators.

The reflection which after all most constantly arises in the mind from the contemplation of such dreadful scenes, is the one to which reference has in part already been made towards the commencement of these details—an astonishment almost amounting to incredulity that the French nation could have stood by, and seen and suffered them to be enacted. Everything was done which human wickedness could accomplish to outrage the strongest feelings of our nature, and those feelings of every description; for while the most atrocious, the most shameless injustice, proverbially said to drive wise men mad, was displayed with an audacity that would hardly be becoming in those whose judgment was infallible and nature impeccable, and while the highest dignities, the most

exalted institutions were laid prostrate at the feet of the vulgar tyrants of a day, such deeds of blood were perpetrated as always take the strongest hold upon the feelings of the bulk of mankind ; and all this was not merely submitted to in patience ; a considerable portion of the people in many places were active approvers, and many were agents, and were stained with these dreadful crimes. If any one had, before 1789, aye, or even before 1792, foretold that the French people would submit to a law preventing men upon trial for their lives from being heard in their own defence, and commanding that the judges should condemn to death for political offences without evidence, he would have been laughed to scorn as a false prophet, and reprobated as a public slanderer. But if any one had pretended to foresee the time when the statue of a miscreant universally scorned and detested for daily recommending the wholesale murder of his fellow-creatures, without a vestige of those talents which too often conceal the nakedness of guilt, or those graces which lend a passing hue of fairness to the external surface of moral poison, would, with general applause, even of those who had loathed him living, be enshrined in the national temple of glory, among men whose genius and virtue had long been the pride of the French people—assuredly such a seer would have been deemed insane. Can anything more strikingly or

more frightfully impress upon the mind a sense of the mischiefs which may spring from popular enthusiasm, when bad men obtain sway over a nation little informed, and unable or unwilling to think and judge for itself; ready to believe whatever it is told by interested informants, to follow whatever is recommended by false advisers acting for their own selfish ends? That no such scenes could now be renewed in France we may very safely venture to affirm, though much mischief might still be wrought by undue popular excitement. That in this country such things are wholly impossible needs no proof; the very least of the terrible departures from justice which marked the course of the French mob-tyranny, would at once overthrow whatever person might here attempt to reign by such means, and would probably drive us into some extremes diametrically opposite to those which had given birth to any outrage of the kind. But this security arises wholly from the people's habit of thinking for themselves, and the impossibility of any one making them act upon grounds which they do not comprehend, or for purposes in which they have no manifest interest, or to suit views carefully concealed from them, and only covered over with vague phrases, which in this country are always the source of incurable distrust.

It is impossible to say the same thing of all

parts of our people; it would be most false to assert, for example, that the Irish are safe from such influence. On the contrary, they manifestly do not think and judge for themselves; they certainly are in the hands of persons who need not take the trouble to give sound reasons, or any reasons at all, for their advice. The Irish people are excited and moved to action in the mass by appeals to matters of which they do not take the pains to comprehend even the outline, much less to reflect on the import and tendency. They are made, and easily made, to exert themselves for things of which they have formed no distinct idea, and in which they have no real interest whatever. They leave to others, their spiritual and their political guides, the task of forming their opinions for them, if mere cry and clamour, mere running about and shouting, can be called opinions. They never are suspicious of a person's motives, merely because they see he has an interest in deceiving them. They never weigh the probabilities of the tale, nor the credit of him that tells it. They may be deceived by the same person nine times in succession, and they will believe him just as implicitly the tenth; nay, were he to confess that he had wilfully deceived them to suit a purpose of his own, they would only consider this a proof of his honesty, and lend an ear if possible more readily to his next imposture. A people thus uninstructed,

thus excited, thus guided, are most deeply to be pitied; and the duty is most imperative of their rulers, by all means, and without delay, to rescue them from such ignorance, and save them from such guides by every kindly mode of treatment which a paternal Government can devise. But such a people, especially if the natural goodness of their dispositions were not outraged by scenes of a cruel kind, would easily be moved to witness and to suffer the grossest violations of justice, would let themselves be hallooed on to the attack of their best friends by any wily impostor that might have gained their confidence, and would suffer men as base and as execrable as Marat to usurp the honours of their Pantheon.

But it must be admitted that there existed two powerful causes of the success which attended the vile agitators of France,—causes sufficient to account for much of the impression which they were allowed to make, and of the impunity which they enjoyed after their worst misdeeds.

In the *first* place there was a very large portion of genuine and even virtuous patriotism among many of the men who bore a part in public affairs, who remained attached to their principles during the struggle of parties, and who were but little corrupted by the personal views which had early seduced so many of their chiefs. They had a strong feeling in favour of liberty, and of con-

sequent attachment to the Revolution in the first and guiltless stage of its existence ; they had also an ardent love of their country, of her glory, above all, of her independence. The court-party early betrayed views, natural in their position, hostile to the new order of things ; and as the revolutionary measures more departed from moderation, and the existence of the monarchy became more exposed to peril, that party cast their eyes unhappily towards foreign assistance, the idea which at once aroused the feelings of Frenchmen, and marshalled on the side of even an extreme policy, a large portion of the community not originally prepared to part with all the existing institutions of that ancient kingdom. Nothing but the invasion of the allies in 1792 could have reconciled such men to the violence which was then done, not only to the court and royal family, but also to multitudes of harmless individuals in obscure station. The brilliant progress of the war during the Reign of Terror blinded many persons to the atrocities daily committed ; and their perpetrators had the skill to make it supposed that a sudden reverse of the singular fortune which attended their arms, if not an invasion of France by the allies, was the alternative to be expected from the overthrow of their dominion and a restoration of moderate and regular government. In the midst of all the factious conflicts which tore the infant

Republic, the general prevalence of purely patriotic feelings and of motives solely influenced by honest views of the public good, how often soever mistaken, remains quite unquestionable. The great bulk of the Convention, and many even of the leaders, were men devoted to their country, and bent only on the discharge of their public duty. "*La patrie*," the magic word which never lost its influence, was in all men's mouths, but also in most men's hearts. Many chiefs who became corrupted by ambition in the course of their exertions for her interests, or perverted by hostility towards each other in the progress of their mutual conflicts, began their career with as unfeigned a love of their country, and as honest an attachment to revolutionary principles, and the cause of just reform, as ever filled the hearts or guided the course of any statesmen in any age. Some of the great leaders, as Robert Lindet, Vergniaud, perhaps Danton and Camille, retained the same principles throughout their short and stormy lives. Some, as Carnôt, Lakanal, Barthélemy, probably Rœderer, after holding fast by their integrity during the awful struggle that was so fitted to try men's souls, survived the tempest, and adorned by their talents and edified by their virtues the more tranquil season that succeeded. The criminal portion of the revolutionists were few in number compared to those whom they duped by their arts, or whom they succeeded in

overawing by the violence of the multitude. But it was not wholly against their will, or through the mere influence of terror, that the bulk of the Convention and of the country submitted to the outrages of the Decemvirs. An alarm of an opposite nature worked strongly on their minds; the dread of a Counter-revolution, and of the vengeance which its leaders, if successful, would surely exercise, had a very powerful operation in reconciling men's minds to the existing Government; and it is certain that the execution of the King and the other crimes early committed by some and connived at by all, had the greatest influence in causing a general fear of retribution and a proportional alarm at what must happen, should the old dynasty be restored.

These considerations must be taken into our account in examining the conduct of the French, and accounting for their submission to the tyranny, injustice, and cruelty of their revolutionary chiefs; else we shall both mistake the state of the question and do injustice to that great people. It is also due to the leading men of those times that we record how pure was the attachment of many of them to their country, and how little other motives operated on their minds. The course so frequent in such times, leading others from patriotism to faction, from zeal for a principle to impatience of opposition, and from desire of victory over an adversary to the lust of power for personal grati-

fication, gave rise to most of the errors and many of the crimes which we have been contemplating. A melancholy consideration of these and their causes only serves to enhance the value of those men who yielded to no such seductions, and to increase our respect for their pure motives and virtuous lives. But the same contemplation suggests another reflection, teaches another lesson. It shows, with the force of demonstration, the fatal consequences to themselves and their own virtue, of men, however strong their principles and pure their enthusiasm, yielding to such a passion, and overleaping under its influence the plain line of duty which forbids the doing of evil that good may come. It shows the fatal consequences to the community of suffering parties and their chiefs to acquire the ascendant, when pretending, perhaps at first really meaning, to rule the state for the furtherance of a wholesome, rational policy—it being hard to say whether more wickedness may be committed by public men under the influence of enthusiasm, or more detriment sustained by the country under the misguidance of faction.

In the *second* place it must be observed that in all times of revolutionary violence there is an impunity secured to the worst characters by the spirit of party, and especially by the slowness of party chiefs to sacrifice even their worst adherents, and give them over to the merited indignation of the

world. See the universal horror and disgust which Marat inspired in all men and of all parties—his odious violence, his virulence of temper more hateful still, his savage ferocity of manner exacerbated by the fury of his sentiments, and the wildness of his propositions; his avowed authorship of a journal which openly preached the indiscriminate massacre of whole classes for their political principles; his constant efforts to excite the mob and drive them towards the most infernal excesses*—all

* In recommending the massacre of all aristocrats, he scrupled not to proclaim through his paper, the '*Ami du Peuple*,' that 270,000 heads must fall by the guillotine; and he published lists of persons whom he consigned to popular vengeance and destruction by their names, description, and places of residence. He was remarkable for the hideous features of a countenance at once horrible and ridiculous, and for the figure of a dwarf, not above five feet high. He was on his first appearance in the mob-meetings of his district the constant butt of the company, and maltreated by all, even to gross personal rudeness. The mob, however, always took his part, because of the violence of his horrid language. Thus, long before he preached wholesale massacre in his journal, he had denounced 800 deputies as fit for execution, and demanded that they should be hanged on as many trees. His constant topic was assassination, not only in his journal, but in private society. Barbaroux describes him in his '*Mémoires*' (p. 59) as recommending that all aristocrats should be obliged to wear a badge, in order that they might be recognised and killed. "But," he used to add, "you have only to wait at the playhouse door and mark those who come out, and to observe who have servants, carriages, and silk clothes; and if you kill them all, you are pretty sure you have

these execrable and utterly abominable things had so entirely obliterated the merits which his revolutionary violence and devotion to the extreme party might seem to display, that no one would associate with him or remain on the bench of the assembly on which he took his seat; and when he rose to vindicate himself from the charges on which he was put upon his trial, and began by saying that he was aware he had many enemies in the Convention, his voice was drowned by cries from every quarter of "*All! All!*"—Yet the Jacobin party allowed this wretch to be elected one of the deputies from the capital;* and neither Robespierre nor any of

killed so many aristocrats. Or if ten in a hundred should be patriots, it don't signify—you have killed ninety aristocrats." He was about fifty at the time of his death, being born in 1744, and consequently of an age prior to that of the other leaders except Bailly, who was born in 1736. He is said to have taught French in Edinburgh about the year 1774; and he there published a pamphlet in English under the title of '*The Chains of Slavery.*' He was born at Neuchâtel, and was an obscure medical practitioner in Paris. He published some works of some learning and little other merit on subjects of physical science.

* There were among the twenty-four deputies of Paris in the Convention ten of the greatest leaders, exclusive of Marat,—Robespierre and his brother, Danton, Collot d'Herbois, Camille Desmoulins, Legendre, Fabre d'Eglantine, Billaud Varennes, David, and Egalité (*ci-devant* Duc d'Orléans). Robespierre's brother was a person of no weight, and only known from his relationship. He was, however, a zealous republican, was employed with the army of Italy

his adherents, nor even Danton, ventured to denounce him, and to give their real and known sentiments respecting him—nay, when the accident of his assassination had freed the earth from so monstrous a pollution, and his bust was simply for that reason placed in the Pantheon, most of the great leaders paid tributes of respect from time to time to his memory, holding up his supposed services as objects of public gratitude, and his death as a martyrdom for revolutionary principles. Yet that death had not obliterated the recollection of any one of the enormities of his life, which had made him so justly the object of universal scorn. Robespierre pronounced his funeral oration; David boasted of preserving by his pencil “the cherished features of the virtuous friend of the people;” and Danton most unaccountably and preposterously called him the Divine Marat, boasting after his assassination of having long before given him that very absurd appellation.

Can any one doubt that such conduct in parties and their chiefs, such a pusillanimous truckling to the passions of the rabble, such a base pandering to their worst propensities as this silence respecting great criminals implies, must ever be as impolitic as it is profligate and unprincipled? We have

when it took Nice; and he sacrificed himself generously on the downfall of his brother, with whom he was arrested at his own desire, and executed with the Triumvirate.

examples of its consequences in all ages, and it has proved most injurious to many a great man's renown. It was probably only as a party leader that Julius Cæsar, without partaking in Catiline's conspiracy, spoke far too gently of it, and gave its accomplices his protection, if not his countenance, on the proceeding against them before the senate. But the result of this party delicacy has been the impression which still rests on the memory of that great man, and leads to a prevailing suspicion of his having secretly joined the most abandoned of conspirators. So, in modern times, whoever is afraid of reprobating and attacking known guilt merely for fear of losing the support of some partisan, or offending some party, must make up his mind to passing for the accomplice in crimes which, whether from timidity or upon calculation, he dares not denounce. Against the loss of support let men wisely set the loss of character, which such an unprincipled course is sure to entail upon those who pursue it; and it is not doubtful on which side the balance of the account will be found to rest.

One other reflection of a practical nature is important enough to be here added, as the natural result of the survey which we have been taking of the Reign of Terror—I mean the extreme danger of allowing political bodies, under any pretext

whatever, to interfere with the administration of justice. The Convention's controversy with the Revolutionary Tribunal was in truth the cause of all the horrors which we have been contemplating. The thin disguise under which this interference was veiled could deceive no one, least of all those who made use of it to hide their tyranny. "The public good"—"the danger of the country"—"the safety of the people"—above all, "the privileges of the Legislative Body" and "the sacred rights of the people's representatives"—were constantly in men's mouths as a justification for the Convention assuming the judicial power, and subjugating the courts of justice. When we see our own Houses of Parliament setting up their claim to punish summarily all who dispute, even in courts of law, and according to the course which the law prescribes, those powers declared in no written statute, and only asserted or defined from time to time as their exercise is found convenient, and always after the act is done which they are put forth to condemn and to visit—surely we may well feel some alarm at such a stride towards the very worst of the outrages on all justice and all humanity that form the chief disgrace of the French Revolution. To take an example:—The House of Commons prints and sells libels upon individuals; and if the injured party dare, without leave, to sue the printers or the authors whose slanders the Commons have thought

fit to publish, he is sent to prison for breach of privilege. But if the injured party petitions humbly for leave to proceed in vindicating his wounded honour, he meets with a flat refusal. It is the pleasure of the Commons to deal in slander, and to this he must submit. Nay, it was quite clear that a late government, being unable to give their mob supporters strong measures of innovation, attacked the Judges instead—knowing this to be, in the mob's eyes, an acceptable equivalent.

SIÉYES.

THERE are few names in the French Revolution which have figured so much as that of the Abbé Siéyes; and hardly any which is better known in connexion with this great chapter of modern story. Those who have only marked the space which he filled in debate, or the merits of his celebrated tracts at the convocation of the States General, or the failure of all his plans of constitutions, are apt to underrate the importance of his labours, and to suppose that his high place in the revolutionary Pantheon had been inconsiderately awarded by the public voice. A personal acquaintance with him would certainly have led to the same conclusion. But near observers, belonging to the times in which he figured, entirely dissent from this opinion, and give reasons, apparently satisfactory, for taking the more ordinary view of his services and his importance. I have frequently discussed the subject both with General Carnôt and Prince Talleyrand, neither of them at all likely to be deceived by a mere theorist, both of them entertaining very little respect for a metaphysical politician, and

from all their own tastes and habits sure to regard with somewhat of disdain a purely speculative statesman. Yet both agreed in affirming the great merit of the Abbé, and they appealed to the extreme importance of the measures which proceeded from him, and for the suggestion of which they both gave him the exclusive credit.

v Those great measures were three in number, of which certainly it would not be easy to overrate the importance,—namely, the joint verification of the powers at the meeting of the States General, the formation of the National Guards, the establishment of the new system of provincial division and administration. The first of these measures led directly to the important step of the three orders, Prelates, Peers, and Commons, sitting in one chamber, and the consequent absorption of the whole in the latter body. The value of the second needs not be dwelt upon. But the third was by far the most material of the whole, because it not only settled the Revolution upon an immoveable foundation—the admission of the people everywhere to a share in the local administration of their concerns—but destroyed the remains of the monarchical divisions of the territory, and rendered inevitable that grand step, the most precious of all the fruits of the Revolution, the abolition of the various local and customary codes, and the extension over the whole country of one universal system of juris-

prudence ; in the stead of a state of things so intolerable, and so absurd, as the existence of totally different laws in different streets of the same town or hamlet.

If it is granted that the whole praise of these reforms belongs undivided to Siéyes, it is proved that his was a mind most fertile of resources, and that its conceptions were not more vast than they were practical. M. Thiers describes his genius as characterised by this peculiarity—"a systematic concatenation of his own ideas"—a peculiarity which he shared with our Bentham ; and the likeness is only made the more striking when the author adds, that "to this was united an inflexible obstinacy of disposition, which made him as tenacious of his own opinions as he was intolerant of all others." (*Hist. de la Révol. Française*, tom. i.) M. Mignet describes him as still more of a speculatist ; but his sketch loses not at all the resemblance to what we have seen of Bentham. "Siéyes," says he, "would have founded a sect in the days of monkish solitude ; and study had early ripened his faculties, and filled his mind with new, strong, and extensive ideas, but somewhat systematic. Society had been the main subject of his investigations. He had followed its progress, and decomposed its springs, and he conceived the nature of government to be rather a question of age and period than of rights ; he disclaimed the ideas of others, because

he found them incomplete : and, in his eyes, half a truth was equivalent to error. Opposition irritated him ; he was not communicative ; he desired to be understood entirely, and this he found impossible with half the world. His disciples transmitted his systems to others, and this gave them a mysterious air, and made him the object of a kind of worship. He possessed the authority which attends a perfect political science, and the constitution might have sprung from his head, like Minerva from Jupiter's or the codes of ancient lawgivers, if it had not been that in our days every one claimed a right of aiding him, or of modifying his work. Nevertheless, his forms were, with some modifications, for the most part adopted ; and in the Committees, where his labours lay, he had more disciples than fellow-workmen." (*Hist. de la Révol. Française*, tom. i. p. 113.)

As of other remarkable persons, so of Siéyes are there many things recounted which appear to rest on no foundation. Of this description is the story so often told, that on the question coming to him upon the punishment which should be inflicted on the unfortunate Louis XVI., he, impatient of the speeches which had preceded him, pronounced these words, "*La mort, sans phrase.*" No such thing is recorded in the account published by authority in the 'Moniteur.' Under the head of Deputies from the Department of La Sarthe, we have this entry :—

“Froyer—La Mort.

“Siéyes—La Mort.

“Le 'Tournour*—La Mort.”

It is a form of voting adopted by many of the members, and nothing whatever distinguishes these from the other votes.

To the earlier period of the Revolution, the importance and the fame of Siéyes must be confined. Nothing can well exceed the absurdity of some plans which he, at a later stage, propounded. He had a great share in the proceedings of Brumaire, which overthrew the Directory and founded the Consulship under Napoleon. But he desired not to establish a Consulate, of which he should himself hold his share, a divided and nominal third of the supreme power, while in reality all authority was to be vested in one of his colleagues. He proposed a form of government, which, for its absurdity, may fairly challenge the pre-eminence with any not the produce of Dean Swift's satirical humour. Napoleon should, according to this strange scheme, have been invested with the supreme magistracy, but without any power, executive or legislative; enriched with an enormous salary, and suffered to exercise the whole patronage, civil and military, of the State, while others were named by the people to make the laws, and conduct, in union with his executive nominees, the

* Le Tournour de la Manche; afterwards one of the Executive Directory.

government of the country. Napoleon's remark was, that he had no wish to "be a fattened hog, on a salary of some millions (*cochon à l'engrais à une salaire de quelques millions*), after the life which he had led and in the position to which it had carried him." I must add that I have met with several French politicians, neither ignorant nor speculative, who had, much to my surprise, formed a favourable opinion of this plan.*

In the beginning of the year 1817, I made acquaintance with the Abbé, at that time, with Cambacérès and other regicides, residing at Brussels. I was then on my way to attend my parliamentary duties at the opening of the Session; and finding himself in company with a party leader, he was—unfortunately for me, who desired to hear him descant on matters which he understood—led to give me, at great length and with little fruit, his ideas upon a point the most incomprehensible to a foreigner, and indeed the most difficult for any uninitiated Englishman, any Englishman out of the vortex of practical politics, to understand,—namely, the course most fitting, in the circumstances of the moment, for the English Parliamentary opposition to take. I admired the unhesitating confidence with which he delivered authoritatively his opinions, oracularly dictating to me his crude, absurd, most ignorant notions.

* M. Thiers in his "*Consulat*" takes this view.

I marvelled at the boldness of the man who could thus lecture one necessarily well acquainted with the subject, of which the lecturer could not by possibility understand the A, B, C. I exceedingly lamented the loss of what might have been interviews productive of curious information. I returned to England without the least disposition to put a single one of his absurdities to the test of experience; for indeed to have mentioned even the most tolerable of them to the least experienced of my party would have been to raise a doubt of my seriousness, if not of my sanity. Both my valued friend the late Lord Kinnaird and myself were mightily struck with the contrast which Cambacérès presented to the Abbé in these interviews.

After the Revolution of 1830 Siéyes returned to Paris, where he lived to an extreme old age; and for several years before his death paid no attention to anything except the care of his health, seldom seeing his friends, and only quitting his house to take an airing in a carriage. A general desire was expressed by his colleagues of the Institute, that he should return to his place in that illustrious body. Count Rœderer was one of a deputation which sought an interview with him in the hopes of prevailing upon him to change his resolution and yield to the general wish. The attempt was vain: and a touching scene was described to me by the Count. After saying how

useless a member he should now be of any association, and conversing, but in a strain that bore marks of the hand of age being upon him, he said, "Enfin, je ne sais plus parler, ni"—and after a pause he added, "ni—me taire."

FOUCHÉ, (AFTERWARDS) DUKE OF OTRANTO.

[FOR THIS NOTE I AM INDEBTED TO MY NOBLE AND LEARNED FRIEND
THE EARL STANHOPE.]

I FORMED his acquaintance at Dresden, where he arrived about November, 1815, as French Minister, but in a sort of honourable exile; and he told me that the Duke of Wellington had advised him not to accept that mission, saying, "You will get into a hole which you will never be able to leave." He afterwards expressed to me his regret at not having followed that advice, and his opinion that the anticipation was realized by the event.

From an exaggerated opinion, both of his own importance and of the malice of his enemies, he had left Paris in disguise, and was so apprehensive of being recognized, that when he met his wife on the road he would not acknowledge her. He had remained some weeks at Brussels, and carried on a correspondence with the Duke of Wellington and others, but, after receiving from the French Government a peremptory order to repair to his post, he continued his journey under the name of M. Durand, marchand de vin, till he came to Leipzig, where he resumed his own name. He was accompanied by his wife, who was of the family of Castellane, and related, as he said, to the Bourbons, with four children by his former marriage, by an eldest son who appeared to be of weak intellect, and who became remarkable for his avarice, by two other sons who, even in their

childhood, exhibited a strong disposition to cruelty, by a daughter, and by a very intriguing governess, Mdlle. Riband.

He had been early in life a professor in the Oratoire, and it was said very truly at Dresden that he had "*le visage d'un moine, et la voix d'un mort*," and, as he was for some time the only foreign minister at that court, that he appeared "like the ghost of the departed corps diplomatique." His countenance showed great intelligence, and did not indicate the cunning by which he was eminently distinguished; his manner was calm and dignified, and he had, either from nature or from long habit, much power of self-possession. When I announced to him the execution of Marshal Ney, of which by some accident I had received the earliest information, his countenance never changed. He appeared to be nearly sixty years of age, and his hair had become as white as snow, in consequence of his having, according to his own expression, "slept upon the guillotine for twenty-five years." His conversation was very animated and interesting, but it related chiefly to events in which he had been an actor, and his inordinate vanity induced him to say: "I am not a king, but I am more illustrious than any of them." His statements did not deserve implicit credence, and I may mention as an instance his bold denial that during the whole course of his long administration as Minister of Police, any letter had ever been opened at the post-office.

Amongst a great number of anecdotes which he related to me, there were two that exhibited in a very striking manner the fertility of his resources when he acted on his own theatre, though, as I shall afterwards show, he appeared utterly helpless amidst the difficulties which he encountered at Dresden.

While he was on a mission to the newly-established Cisalpine Republic, he received orders from the French

Directory to require the removal of some functionaries who were obnoxious to the Austrian Government. He refused to comply, and stated in his answer that those functionaries were attached to France; that the ill-will with which they were viewed by the Austrian Government was not a reason for the French Government to demand their dismissal; that, according to intelligence which had reached him, Austrian troops were advancing, and that the war would be renewed. The orders were reiterated without effect, and one morning he was informed that an agent of the Directory was arrived at his house, and was accompanied by some *gens d'armes*. Fouché desired that the agent might be admitted, and that a message might be sent to his friend General Joubert, who commanded some French troops then stationed in the same town, requesting him to come immediately, and to bring with him a troop of cavalry. The agent delivered to Fouché letters of recall, and showed to him afterwards an order to arrest him and to conduct him to Paris. Fouché made some observations to justify himself till the arrival of Joubert with the cavalry was announced, when he altered his tone, and told the agent: "You talk of arresting me, and it is in my power to arrest you." Joubert said, on entering the room, "*Me voilà avec mes dragons, mon cher ami; que puis-je faire à votre service?*" and Fouché replied: "*Ce drôle-là veut m'arrêter.*" "Comment!" exclaimed Joubert, "*dans ce cas-là je le taillerai en mille pièces.*" The agent excused himself as being obliged to execute the orders which he had received, and was dismissed by Fouché with the remark, "*Vous êtes un sot; allez tranquillement à votre hôtel.*" When he had retired, Fouché observed that the Directory was not respected either at home or abroad, that it would therefore be easy to overthrow the government, and that Joubert might obtain high office if he would assist in the undertaking. Joubert answered that he was merely a soldier, and that he did not

wish to meddle in politics ; but he granted Fouché's request of furnishing him with a military escort to provide for his safety till he reached Paris. On the road he prepared an address to the Council of Five Hundred, which was calculated to be very injurious, and perhaps fatal, to the government. When he arrived at Paris he called on each of the Directors, but was not admitted, and he expressed to me his conviction that he should have been arrested the next morning if he had not immediately insisted upon having an audience with Talleyrand, then Minister for Foreign Affairs. Fouché, after defending his conduct, said that he considered it his duty, before he presented his address, to show it to Talleyrand, who no sooner read it than he saw its dangerous tendency, and the whole extent of the mischief to which it might lead. He told Fouché: "I perceive that there has been a misunderstanding, but everything may be arranged:" and added, "the post of Minister to the Batavian Republic is now vacant, and perhaps you would be willing to accept it." Fouché, who perceived that the other was intimidated, determined to avail himself of the advantage which he had acquired, and replied that his honour and character had been attacked, that immediate reparation was necessary, and that his credentials must be prepared in the course of the night, in order that he might the next day depart on his mission. This request having been granted, Fouché proceeded to state that his journey to Paris had been very expensive ; that he had, through his abrupt departure from the Cisalpine Republic, lost several valuable presents which he would have received ; and that his new mission required another outlay, for all of which he demanded an order for the immediate payment of two hundred thousand francs by the national treasury. Talleyrand gave the order without hesitation ; and Fouché, who had arrived in disgrace, if not in great danger, departed the next morning as a minister plenipotentiary with a considerable sum of money

After Napoleon, on his return from Elba, had made such progress as alarmed the French Government, Monsieur, afterwards Charles X., sent a message to Fouché requesting a meeting with him in the Tuileries. Fouché declined it, saying that as the circumstance would be known, it would place his conduct in a very ambiguous light, and he then received another message proposing to meet him at the house of a third party. To this proposal Fouché assented, on the condition that the interview should take place in the presence of witnesses, two of whom should attend on each side. On such an occasion any questions of etiquette must have appeared of very subordinate importance; the condition was accepted, and in the interview, which lasted several hours, and till long after midnight, Fouché was offered the appointment of Police, the title of Prince, and the decoration of the St. Esprit. Fouché replied that the advance of Napoleon was the natural and necessary consequence of the general discontent which prevailed; that no human power could prevent his arrival at Paris; that Fouché's acceptance of office under such circumstances might create an impression of his having betrayed a sovereign whom he ought faithfully to serve; and that he was therefore obliged to reject the offers which in the course of the conversation were repeatedly pressed on his acceptance. It seemed to be supposed by the French Government that the refusal of such offers was an indication of attachment to Napoleon, and the next morning, when Fouché was in his carriage, at a short distance from his own house, he was stopped "in the name of the King," by an officer of police, attended by gens d'armes. Fouché desired them to accompany him to his house, when, on getting out of the carriage, he demanded the production of the warrant by which he was arrested; and on its being shown to him, he threw it on the ground, exclaiming, "It is a forgery; that is not the King's signature." The officer of police, astounded by the effrontery

with which Fouché spoke, allowed him to enter the house, when he made his escape through the garden, and went to the Princesse de Vaudremont, who concealed him till the return of Napoleon. Mdlle. Ribaud, the governess, sent a message to the National Guards requesting their immediate attendance, and conducted through the house the officer of police, as he told her that he had orders to take possession of Fouché's papers. His bureaux, &c. were searched, but nothing of any importance was found in them, and Mdlle. Ribaud when passing through her own room drew a trunk from beneath her bed, and, taking a key out of her pocket, offered to show her clothes to the officer of police, who said that he had no wish to give her that trouble. It was, however, in that trunk that Fouché's important papers were deposited. In the mean time the National Guards had arrived, and after they were harangued by Mdlle. Ribaud on the merits and services of Fouché, and on the insult and injustice with which he had been treated, they drove away the gens d'armes who attended the officer of police.

Fouché, who after the return of Napoleon was re-appointed Minister of Police, was asked by him whether it was not very desirable to obtain the services of Talleyrand, who was then one of the French ambassadors at Vienna. "Certainly," replied Fouché; and Napoleon then said, "What do you think of sending to him a handsome snuff-box?" Fouché, aware of the extreme absurdity of endeavouring to bribe a minister, who was supposed to be rapacious, by a present which, as a matter of course, he had received on the conclusion of every treaty, observed, if a snuff-box were sent to Talleyrand, he should open it to see what it contained. "What do you mean?" inquired Napoleon. "It is idle," replied Fouché, "to talk of sending to him a snuff-box. Let an order for two millions of francs be sent to him, and let one half of the sum be payable on his return to

France." "No," said Napoleon, "that is too expensive, and I shall not think of it."

When Napoleon determined to hold the Assembly of the *Champ de Mai*, he convened his Council of State, and read to them the speech which he intended to deliver on that occasion. Some of the members expressed their entire and unqualified approbation, and others suggested a few verbal alterations: but Fouché, when it came to his turn, said that he disapproved of it both in its form and in its substance, and he then strung together some of the commonplace phrases with which his ordinary conversation so much abounded, that "truth must be heard," that "illusions could no longer prevail," &c. One of the Councillors having remarked that a written document would be very desirable for the discussion, Fouché produced the speech which he had prepared. It stated that the Allied Powers had declared war not against France, but against Napoleon; that if they were sincere in their professions, they would guarantee to France her independence, and the free choice of her own government, and that he would in that case abdicate the throne; but that if such a guarantee were refused, it would be a proof that they were insincere, and that he would then ask permission to place himself at the head of the French armies in order to defend the honour of the country. Napoleon made no observation; but, calling the Councillors to him in succession, and whispering a few words to each of them, they rejected the proposal. He must have perceived that the Allies, who viewed with anxiety and mistrust the mighty conflict in which they were about to engage, would have granted the guarantee which was required; that he should have been obliged to abdicate; and that a Republic would have been established in which Fouché hoped and expected to acquire more power than he had yet possessed. Napoleon had on a former occasion removed Fouché from office, and reproached him with his insatiable

ambition, saying, "You might always have been minister, but you aspired to be more, and I will not suffer you to become a Cardinal Richelieu."

The Memoirs which after Fouché's death were published under his name do not appear to be authentic, and the statements contained in them differ in many respects from those which I received from him, but neither the one nor the other may have been founded in truth. He read to me occasionally some detached passages, which he composed without any reference to chronological order, but as the circumstances occurred to his mind, and according to his original plan, which he communicated to me in a letter. He intended to divide his narrative into the following parts:—

"La 1^e explique la révolution qui a fait passer la France de l'antique monarchie à la république; la 2^e celle qui a fait passer la France de la république à l'Empire de Bonaparte; la 3^e celle qui a fait passer la France de cet Empire à la Royauté des Bourbons; la 4^e partie dira la situation de la France et de l'Europe."

In another letter he states:—

"Je travaille huit heures par jour à mon mémoire. Ceux qui croient que ce sont les hommes qui font les révolutions seront étonnés de voir leur origine. J'ai déjà peint le premier tableau des événemens d'où sont sorties nos tempêtes passées. Le pendant de ce tableau sera un assez gros image d'où partira la foudre qui menace notre avenir."

His participation in the atrocities of the Revolution inspired horror at Dresden, where he formed very few acquaintances, and received hardly any visits except from Count Salmur, a Piedmontois, who had known him at Paris, and from General Gaudi, who had been sent by the Prussian Government to negotiate with respect to the line of demarcation of the Saxon provinces which were ceded, and who had received instructions from Prince Hardenberg to see Fouché frequently, and to watch his proceedings. Fouché said to me

very often, "J'ai une folle envie d'écrire, et il faut que j'aille à la campagne;" and I knew that he was not disturbed by many visitors, but I observed to him that he might give directions not to admit them. He replied, "Ne voyez-vous pas que j'ai une jeune femme, et quand je me pousse en force, je la perds d'une autre manière?" I told him that he might very easily hire one of the country-houses which at that time of year were unoccupied; but he said that he should expect the owner to remain there during his residence, and to treat him with the respect and attention which were due to him. He seemed to think that even a stranger would be too happy to accept the proposal, and to have an opportunity of associating with a person who, according to his own opinion, was "more illustrious" than any king.

The confidential communications which he received from Paris were addressed to him under another name, and directed to the care of a pastrycook in that part of the town which lies on the other bank of the Elbe. He preserved his former habits of "espionnage," and remarked to me that a person who lived on the opposite side of the street sat close to the window, was much occupied in writing, was very regular in his habits, &c. He seemed to be amused in watching this unknown individual, who was afterwards discovered to be a spy sent by the French Government to observe Fouché.

His ignorance of geography, &c., was really ludicrous. When he heard that Napoleon was sent to St. Helena, he inquired on which side of the Cape it lay; and when he was told by an Englishman that he was going to Hamburgh to embark for England, he asked, "Are you not afraid at this time of year of making a voyage in the Baltic?" The other replied that he did not embark on the Baltic. "No," said Fouché, after some consideration, "you will go by the sea of Denmark."

He was extremely delighted when he was informed that

Lavalette had effected his escape by the good offices of Sir Robert Wilson and two other Englishmen, and after making a pompous eulogium on them, he said that although they had been punished by the French Government, they would everywhere be respected and honoured; that their conduct must excite general admiration, &c.; and after a long course of high-flown compliments, he concluded by an anticlimax, "if they should come here, I will even invite them to dinner."

According to a homely expression, "there was no love lost" between Fouché and Talleyrand. The former said, "Talleyrand est nul" till after he has drunk a bottle of Madeira: and the latter asked, "Do you not think that Fouché has very much the air of a country comedian?" Fouché spoke very contemptuously of the late Emperor of Austria, whom he called "un crétin."

I thought it indiscreet to ask any questions of Fouché on the cruelties of which he was represented to have been guilty at Lyons and at Nantes; but I took an opportunity of mentioning to him that a biographical memoir of him had appeared in the German language. It excited, as I expected that it would, his curiosity, and he requested me to translate it *vivâ voce*, which I accordingly did; and when the sanguinary scenes of Lyons were noticed he exclaimed, "I went there to save the inhabitants, all of whom would otherwise have been murdered by Collot d'Herbois. As for Nantes, I never was there." I remarked to him that the Memoir referred to letters which were signed both by him and by his colleague, and which had been published in the 'Moniteur;' but he replied that it would at that time have been dangerous to disavow them.

He had received from the Prince of the Asturias, afterwards Ferdinand VII., during his residence at Valençay, the most servile letters, earnestly entreating that Napoleon would confer upon him the high honour of allowing him to

be allied with some relation, however distant, of the Imperial Family. Fouché said that his hand was kissed by the Prince whenever he had occasion to see him; and added, "I washed it afterwards, for he was very dirty."

The intelligence which he received from Paris, through private as well as through public channels, and the hostility which was shown towards the regicides, of whom he was one, rendered him very apprehensive that his property would be confiscated, and he spoke to me frequently upon the subject. He observed that the Charter did not allow confiscation, but added, "*ils ne se gênent pas*;" and he proposed to make a nominal sale of his property to me, in order to place it beyond the grasp of the French Government. I objected to it on the ground that it would not be a *bonâ fide* transaction; but a day or two afterwards I received from him a note, expressing a wish to see me immediately. On going to him, he read to me some papers prepared in technical and legal phraseology, which stated that I had purchased his estates, the annual value of which was, I think, 7000*l.*, and also his house at Paris, with the furniture that it contained. I told him that I had already expressed my disapprobation of the principle on which the transaction would proceed; and I observed to him that the fraud would be discovered, for the French Government would upon inquiry learn from the English ambassador at Paris that I was only an eldest son with a very limited income, and that it was utterly impossible for me to make such purchases. He replied that I might be supposed to have given bonds, or other securities, which were satisfactory to him. I represented to him that the French ambassador in London might by a Bill in Chancery compel me to declare upon oath whether I had or had not purchased his property; and if so, with what funds? And he answered, "*Ces parjures-là ne blessent point la conscience.*" I then said, "You have already informed me that one-half of your property is

settled on your children, and the easiest way of placing the whole of it in safety would be to settle the remainder on Madame la Duchesse." He exclaimed, "Parbleu, vous avez plus d'esprit que moi, et je ferai venir mon secrétaire sur-le-champ." An act in due form was instantly prepared, and, being registered in Dresden, became the subject of general conversation; but I considered his communications as confidential, and I said nothing as to the suggestion which I had offered, or as to my knowledge of the transaction.

He was also very apprehensive as to his personal safety, and said, "I fear that I may be carried off by some gens d'armes, and that no person will ever hear of me again." He then asked whether, in the event of his being arrested, he should not request General Gaudi to intercede for him with the prime minister, Count Einsiedel? I answered that they had no doubt much personal regard for each other, but that in their respective positions it could not be supposed that the former could have any influence with the latter. "Then," replied Fouché, "I will write to the King of Saxony, inquiring what course he will pursue if an order should arrive here for my arrest." He did so, though he was at that time French plenipotentiary: and he received from Count Einsiedel an answer, informing him that the King would under any circumstances act as became a man of honour.

On one occasion, when he was more than usually disquieted by the information which he had that morning received from Paris, he called on me, and after mentioning that he was in great danger, and that he wished to go into the Prussian dominions, he inquired if I would accompany him thither? I assented; and we went together to General Gaudi, who was not acquainted with the objects and motives of the intended journey, but seemed much astonished when Fouché abruptly said to him, "You once told me that you have an aunt who is settled in Silesia; and I should like to

go and live with her." General Gaudi replied that his aunt was old and infirm, and not accustomed to company, and that she would not like to see a stranger. Fouché then conversed with General Gaudi on the choice of a residence, and was with great difficulty dissuaded from going to one of the ceded provinces, the governor of which entertained for him the strongest aversion. After we had left General Gaudi, I asked Fouché when he intended to depart? and he answered, "At twelve o'clock to-night." I told him that it would have a better appearance if he went by daylight; and I added, "You should prepare a passport for yourself." "No," replied Fouché; "I intend to travel under your passport." "How so?" I inquired. "As your valet-de-chambre," answered Fouché. I then said that I was willing to accompany him in his quality of French minister, but that I would not convey him under a false character, or smuggle him through the country as if he were contraband goods. He was much displeased, and employed by turns flattery and abuse; but I remained inflexible; and, as I would not accompany him in the manner which he proposed, he determined to remain at Dresden.

At length there appeared in France a law, or edict, which allowed the regicides to reside, at their own choice, either in Austria, in Prussia, or in Russia; and the Austrian minister desired Fouché to determine which of them he would prefer. He wished to settle at Berlin, where, as he said, his advice would be very useful; but he found upon inquiry that this would not be permitted, and Breslau was proposed to him for a residence, which he did not approve, and he went into the Austrian dominions—first to Prague, where he lived very obscurely and with great economy—afterwards, and for a short time, to Linz on the Danube—and then to Trieste, where he died. His widow, who had a life-interest in half his property, re-married. His house at Paris was

sold to Baron Rothschild ; and it was said, but I know not with what truth, that he bequeathed his manuscripts to Louis XVIII.

It is impossible to close the book that records the rapid, even sudden, rise to power of the men whose course we have been contemplating, without reflecting upon the vanity and emptiness of the gratification held out to ambition, or vanity, or love of glory, by revolutionary times. That gratification is generally much vaunted as the more precious fruit of civil disorder, and no feature of revolution offers more attractions to the young, the ardent, the daring, than its tendency to exalt merit, and its opening a short path to distinction and to power, which a spirit that spurns the long and laborious ascent under regular governments fondly takes, untired by the slipperiness of the road, and unscared by the precipices yawning on either side. All such spirits are impatient of the slow ascent to fame and influence to which all systems of policy confine the ambitious in ordinary times ; and hence the delight with which they hail the subversion of ancient institutions, and the approach of wide-spreading change.

But to these men the portion of history which we have been examining reads an impressive lesson. No one endowed with even an ordinary share of prudence can be extravagant enough to prefer the

twelve months' possession of power which the Decemvirs obtained as the price of all their struggles, their perils, and their crimes, to the fortune which, slowly gained, would have been long and securely possessed under a regular government. No one setting before his eyes the chances of failure and of destruction which he must have to encounter, and the small probability of being numbered with the successful few, would even deem the prize of some months' dominion, followed by an ignominious death, worth contending for at those hazards, to say nothing of the certain cost of being charged with the heaviest load under which the conscience can labour. The life, certainly the reign, of a demagogue is of necessity a short one: even where religious bigotry and imposture combine with popular ignorance to give it an unnatural extension, it cannot in any civilized state last long. In France, where its despotism was the most uncontrolled, its duration was the shortest, its sufferings and its ignominy the most appalling.

It is thus that the fate of the revolutionary leaders, when duly weighed, is well fitted to teach men the wisdom for their own interest, even if virtue and duty were wholly disregarded, of preferring the sure though slow, the lasting though moderate, rewards which a settled order of things holds out to virtuous ambition or honest love of fame. Such a study may reconcile them, even the

most impatient of them, to the duty of bridling their passions, and submitting to the conditions on which alone power and glory may be innocently enjoyed.

“*Certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,
Nocteis atque dies niti præstante labore
Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri.*”*

But these are not the only reflections which arise naturally in the mind upon a near contemplation of the scenes of the Revolution. We learn, when candidly examining the merits and the history of its great leaders, to distrust the general opinion of them which has prevailed, formed under the influence of the feelings naturally excited by the dreadful events of their day—events the horror of which almost inevitably tended to involve all that had any share of their guilt in an indiscriminate charge of sanguinary and profligate ambition. The public voice might be excused for thus pronouncing one undistinguishing sentence of condemnation upon them at the time, and while the sentiments that had been raised by so bloody a tragedy retained their force. But subsequent authors and reasoners have too frequently fallen into the same error, and treated the subject as superficially as the ephemeral writers and the speakers of the day. The common, almost the invariable, course has been to make no

* “*Striving in genius, scaling still the heights
Of glory ; toiling days and sleepless nights,
Among the wealthy the first place to gain,
And o’er a subjugated empire reign.*”

distinction whatever between the different actors in the drama. Danton has been treated with the same severity as Robespierre; Camille and St. Just have received one award of condemnation. Nay, the wretched Marat, whom it would be a profanation of the name to call a statesman, has not been held up to greater execration and scorn than those who really, more or less, were entitled to be so called. A more calm examination of their history, for which survey the time may be admitted now to have arrived, begets far more than doubts upon the soundness of the commonly received opinion, and teaches us to distribute in very different and very unequal shares our praise and our censure. Even respecting Robespierre himself, it is probable that the pitch of the public voice has been somewhat too high, and that his bad and despicable character, dark as undeniably it was, had still some few redeeming traits to distinguish it from the Collots and the Billauds, by far the worst of the whole.

Allowance, too, must be made for the exaggerated, the exalted state of political feeling that prevailed among party leaders, and even among their followers, very generally in those dismal times. There can be no more certain proof of this than the fact that even at the present day, when time might be supposed to have calmed all the fervour of the revolutionary crisis, and reflection to have opened men's eyes to the degree in

which they had been formerly misled, we find persons in France of unquestionably virtuous principles unable to bestow the just portion of censure upon the companions of their earlier years, and most reluctant to look back upon those scenes with a natural regret. I have been astonished to hear such persons characterise Collot d'Herbois as a well-meaning though misguided man (*bon homme, mauvaise tête*); and somewhat less struck, indeed, though still surprised, to find them hankering after the belief that whatever was done had been the fault of the Royalists and the Allies, while the all-atoning name of "patriot" covered the multitude of Decemviral sins, and the sole regard of every one who acted in those days was deemed to have been "*La Patrie*."

It would be extremely wrong to suffer ourselves to be warped in our opinions by such prejudices, or to let them arrest the judgment required by the interests of truth and justice. Yet it would be equally contrary to both were we to exclude from our consideration the extenuating tendency of the undeniable fact, that all men in those times were more or less under the influence of the temporary delirium which the great change had produced; a delirium which rendered them alike insensible to their own sufferings, blind to their own perils, neglectful of their duties, and regardless of other men's rights.

But having discussed the moral, it remains to add the great political lesson which this important branch of history is so well fitted to teach—the incalculable value of firmness on the part of those intrusted with the powers of government, whether executive, legislative, or judicial. The whole of the French Revolution is one continued example of the powers of intimidation and the dangers of fear. All the successive passages, even the darkest, are cleared up and satisfactorily explained by this consideration. At first apprehension, contagiously spreading into alarm, next rising to terror—that is the pivot on which all turned—that the governing rule of all conduct—that the common principle to reconcile all contradictions, to satisfy all conditions, to reduce all anomalies within rule. A moderate portion of courage in the rulers would have sufficed, if early displayed, to make what soon proved the scourge of the tempest fill the vessel's sails like a favouring breeze—to restrain within safe bounds the force which might have been used as an ally, but soon grew to a remorseless and a pitiless tyrant :—

“ *Parva metû primo, mox sese attollit in auras,
Ingredituque solo et caput inter nubila condit.*”*

- * The puny creature that can hardly scare
Our steps, swift rises hideous through the air,
Stalks o'er the earth resistlessly, and shrouds
Its horrid crest among the rolling clouds.

JOHN, FOURTH DUKE OF BEDFORD.

THE purpose of the following observations is to rescue the memory of an able, an amiable, and an honourable man, long engaged in the public service, both as a minister, a negotiator, and a viceroy,* long filling, like all his illustrious house, in every age of our history, an exalted place among the champions of our free constitution,—from the obloquy with which a licentious press loaded him when living; and it is in every way discreditable

* He was in 1744, when thirty-four years of age, First Lord of the Admiralty, in which capacity he brought forward Keppel, Howe, and Rodney. In 1748 he became Secretary of State, and continued in that office till 1751. In 1756 he went to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant, and remained there with extraordinary popularity till 1761, when he was made Lord Privy Seal. Next year he went as Ambassador to Paris, and after his return was made President of the Council. He retained this office till 1766. He was in 1768 chosen Chancellor of the University of Dublin; and died in 1771. All who have ever spoken of this excellent person, with the exception of Junius, have praised his frank and honest nature, wholly void of all dissimulation and all guile; and have borne a willing testimony to the soundness of his judgment, as well as his unshaken firmness of purpose.

to British justice that few if any attempts have, since his death, been made to counteract the effects of calumny, audaciously invented, and repeated till its work of defamation was done, and the falsehood of the hour became confounded with historical fact.

Beside the satisfaction of contributing to frustrate injustice, and deprive malice of its prey, there is this benefit to be derived from the inquiry upon which I am about to enter. We shall be enabled to test the claims of a noted slanderer to public confidence, and to ascertain how little he is worthy of credit in his assaults upon other reputations. But we shall also be enabled to estimate the value of the class to which he belongs, the body of unknown defamers who, lurking in concealment, bound by no tie of honour, influenced by no regard for public opinion, feeling no sense of shame, their motives wholly inscrutable, gratifying, it may be, some paltry personal spite, or actuated by some motive too sordid to be avowed by the most callous of human beings, vent their calumnies against men whose whole lives are before the world, who in vain would grapple with the nameless mob of their slanderers, but who, did they only know the hand from whence the blows are levelled, would very possibly require no other defence than at once to name their accuser. That the efforts of this despicable race have sometimes prevailed against

truth and justice; that the public, in order to indulge their appetite for abuse of eminent men, have suffered the oft-repeated lie to pass current without sifting its value, and have believed what was boldly asserted, with the hardly credible folly of mistaking for the courage of truth the cheap daring of concealed calumniators, cannot be doubted. The effects produced by the vituperation of Junius upon the reputation of the Duke of Bedford would at once refute any one who should assert the contrary. It becomes of importance then to prove how entirely groundless all his charges were; to show how discreditable it was to the people of this country that they should be led astray by such a guide; and to draw from this instance of delusion a lesson and a warning against lending an ear to plausible, and active, and unscrupulous slanderers.

Before proceeding with our subject, however, we may stop to consider an example of the effect produced upon public opinion, even permanently, by the invention of some phrase easily remembered, and tending to preserve the malignity of the fiction by the epigram that seems in some sort to embalm an otherwise perishable slander. At a moment of great popular excitement (July, 1769), the Livery of the city of London presented an address to the Sovereign, in which they closed a long list of grievances with the statement that "instead of

punishment, honours had been bestowed upon a paymaster, the public defaulter of unaccounted millions." The recent elevation to the peerage of Henry Fox, the first Lord Holland, lately Paymaster of the Forces, was plainly here signified; and it is a humiliating reflection to those who justly prize public opinion, that it should be the sport and the dupe of such audacious impostures. For it is vain to deny that the epithet here bestowed upon that statesman has, in a certain degree, clung to his memory, and given an impression injurious to the purity of his character. The calumny being promulgated by an irresponsible body, and in an address to the throne, no proceedings at law were possible, at least none that would not have been attended with extreme difficulty in a technical view. Lord Holland, however, lost no time in giving the tale his most peremptory contradiction, and by an appeal to facts as notorious to all the world as the sun at noon-day tide. The falsehood, like most others, rested upon a truth, but a truth grossly perverted. The moneys which had passed through the Paymaster's hands were, in one sense, unaccounted; that is, the accounts of his office had not yet been wound up; but they had been delivered in, were under the examination of the auditors, and awaited the final report of those functionaries. It was shown that those accounts, which extended over the years 1757, 1758, and 1759, had reference

to military expeditions in many distant parts of the globe, and that they related to a larger expenditure than in any former war had ever been incurred. Yet they were declared nine years after the expenditure closed. But Mr. Winnington's for 1744, 1745, and 1746, were only declared in 1760, or fourteen years after their close ; and Lord Chatham's, which closed in 1755, were not declared in 1769. It is also to be observed that Lord Chatham had ceased to hold the office in 1755, and had not declared his accounts fourteen years after ; whereas Lord Holland had only resigned the paymastership three years and a half before the charge was made. He had also paid over in eight years balances to the amount of above 900,000*l.*, arising from savings which he had effected in the sums voted for different services. It would certainly not be easy to furnish a more complete answer than the calumnious assertion of the Livery thus received. But it is also certain that the calumny long survived its triumphant refutation. Even in the later periods of party warfare it was revived against the illustrious son of its object ; men of our day can well remember Mr. Fox having it often flung in his teeth, that he was sprung from the "defaulter of unaccounted millions."

The foul slanders of Junius upon the Duke of Bedford differ from the calumny of the Livery in this—that they plainly furnish, to any one who attentively considers them, complete proof of their

own falsehood, in by far the most material particular, and consequently should at once fall to the ground as generally discredited. And they would so fall did not men make it a rule to encourage slander and defeat the ends of truth and justice, by lending a willing ear to all that is alleged against their fellow-creatures, and overlooking, or straightway forgetting, all that is urged in their defence.

The hatred which this writer evinced towards the Duke rests, as far as it has any public ground to support it, upon the junction of the Bedford party with Lord Bute against Lord Chatham; but in all probability there was some sordid or spiteful feeling of a personal kind at the root of it. Lord Chatham had been, like all the great men of the day, the object of the slanderer's fiercest vituperation. He had repeatedly treated him as a "lunatic," and frequently as a "tyrant." Lurking under the name of Publicola, he had lavished upon him every term of gross abuse which his vocabulary supplied; a "man purely and perfectly bad;" a "traitor;" an "intriguer;" a "hypocrite;" "so black a villain, that a gibbet is too honourable a situation for his carcase" (*Woodfall's Junius*, ii. 458). But in the course of a few months from his last attack, which was in 1770, he became appeased; and, whether from beginning to favour Lord Chatham the year before, or from mere hatred towards Lord Bute, his fury broke forth against the Bedford

party, in the letter to its chief, which has been the subject of so much observation, and is certainly the most scurrilous of any that were printed under the name of Junius.

This letter, beside a number of vague charges, amounting only to intemperate abuse, accuses the Duke in his public capacity of having betrayed his trust as ambassador in negotiating the peace of Paris, and betrayed it for money : in his private capacity it charges him with avarice, and hardness of heart towards his only son, for whose sudden death, by a fall from his horse, no due feeling was evinced ; and in a capacity partly public, partly private, it charges him with grossly insulting the sovereign at an audience of his Majesty. There is, further, an allusion to a scene at Lichfield races, represented as derogatory to his honour as a gentleman.

1. He is accused of giving up Belleisle, Goree, Guadaloupe, St. Lucia, Martinique, the Fishery, the Havanna. The proof of this, the main charge, being corrupt conduct, rests upon the Duke's "pecuniary character," which made it "impossible that so many public sacrifices should be made without some private compensation." This "internal evidence," we are told, is "beyond all the legal proofs of a court of justice" (i. 510). When pressed by Sir W. Draper for proofs, the slanderer impudently reiterated his assertion, that the Duke's conduct "carried with it an internal and convincing

evidence against him," adding, that "if nothing could be true but what might be proved in a court of justice, then the Christian religion itself, which rests upon internal evidence, never could have been received and established" (ii. 25). Finally, he refers to De Torcy's *Memoirs* for a statement that "a bribe may be offered to a duke and *only not be accepted*," meaning the Duke of Marlborough; from which the inference is that, because some one has said one man was offered a bribe which he refused, therefore, another man must be believed to have been offered one and accepted it.

That any degree of public malice should have blinded men to the utter flimsiness of this charge, or that any power of epigrammatic writing should have prevented all readers from flinging it away in scorn, seems really incredible. Yet this is not all, nor even the greater part, of the revolting absurdity. The charge is, upon the face of it, false, for it is absolutely impossible. To suppose that an ambassador sent to negotiate a peace has the power to accept any terms whatever which his employers do not authorise him to accept, but above all, an ambassador sent to Paris and corresponding daily with the cabinet in London, argues a degree of thoughtless folly wholly incredible. As well might the courier who carries the instructions be supposed to have the power of giving up islands and fisheries, as the negotiator. Besides, the whole course of

the negotiation in 1762 was conformable to that which, in 1761, had been begun while Lord Chatham was in office. The islands of Guadaloupe and St. Lucia had been offered by him, and Canada had been offered by France. These were the main body of the cessions on either side. The refusal, in 1761, to make any peace without the King of Prussia, and the treating without him, in 1762, was the main difference in the two cases, and was amply accounted for by the abject state of that prince's fortunes in the former year, and his triumphant position in the latter.

The opinions of all men on the merits of this peace have long since been settled, and even at the time it escaped the fate which faction reserved for the next treaty that was made to terminate a war; it was approved by immense majorities of both Houses of Parliament—without a division in the Lords, by 319 to 65 in the Commons. The most eminent authorities both at home and abroad pronounced unbounded praise upon the ability displayed by the Duke in the negotiation. The King himself was beyond measure pleased with it, and showed his sense of the services rendered in a marked manner. The ministers declared that no man but the Duke could have so conducted the negotiation, and that no man had ever rendered so great a service to the state. The veteran diplomatists, Sir Joseph Yorke and Sir Andrew Mitchell, affixed to the treaty the stamp of

their hearty admiration ; and Lord Granville, having only lived to witness the event, declared that “ the most glorious war had been terminated by the most honourable peace this country ever saw.”

Finally, the story of French gold having been used, not, indeed, to perform the impossible feat of bribing our ambassador’s surrender of colonies, but to gain over his employers, had been imputed by an idle busy-body, called Dr. Musgrave, some time before Junius took up the slander, and a committee of the House of Commons, having soon after investigated the matter, had reported that it was utterly frivolous and destitute of all foundation. Now this is fatal to the credit of Junius for veracity, and at once and clearly convicts him of fabrication. For the parties named by Musgrave were the Dowager Princess of Wales, Lord Bute, and Lord Holland ; the Duke of Bedford not being named or alluded to at all in the story.* Yet Junius revives the refuted tale after it had been notoriously repudiated by the political enemies of the parties accused ; and he transfers the story to a party on whom, frivolous as it was, the slander never had been made by its author to attach.

In one accidental particular, the ambassador had an opportunity of acting upon his own responsibility,

* Woodfall (i. 571), with a most inexcusable inaccuracy, gives the story as if it had comprehended the Duke. He never was in any way referred to.

and did act in the only way in which an honourable man could ; and his interposition was effectual to the only extent to which a negotiator ever can effectually operate in his individual capacity—the extent of preventing a premature signature of the treaty. The East India Company had, by a strange oversight, confined their demand of a stipulation in their own favour to a period before the acquisition of their chief conquests ; and the article in the preliminaries was drawn and signed accordingly. The error being pointed out to the Duke by a private individual, he immediately repaired to the French minister, and insisted upon an alteration of the provisions. The minister, the Duc de Choiseul, relied on the signed preliminaries ; but the Duke of Bedford firmly declared that he should at once return to London, and “ submit his head to the discretion of Parliament,” taking upon himself the error of his instructions. The threat was effectual, and the change was made, which restored a territory having the revenue of half a million sterling to the Company and the Crown.

2. The charge of parsimony against the Duke rests upon the same foundation on which a like charge might have been brought against my most dear and respected friend, the late Duke, his grandson, one of the most generous of men. His domestic economy was regulated with care, and showed that superintendence of the head of the family over

its concerns, and that spirit of order, which, with qualities of a much higher nature, has ever distinguished the House of Russell. That there was any want of liberality in the treatment of the lamented person whose sudden death proved the severest blow to the hopes of his kindred, may be at once denied, on the fact made public at the time that Lord Tavistock's allowance was 8000*l.* a year ; that his widow's jointure was increased greatly beyond her marriage settlement on his decease ; and that 50,000*l.* were immediately provided for the posthumous child of whom she was *enceinte* at the time of the accident.* The story of the father's affliction having been less poignant than might have been expected, rests on his having, as speedily as he could, sought the distraction which is to be found in the discharge of public duties. But I can add, that woeful experience speaks to the possibility of performing these during a course of years, when domestic affliction has wholly prevented its victim from indulging in the most ordinary relaxations of social life. The brutal slanderer who could interfere at such a moment to outrage the grief of a parent, cared as little for the truth of his charge as he could know of the feelings which he invaded.

Other testimony, and of a very different value, exists to the complete refutation of his cold-blood

* Lord William Russell, unhappily murdered in the year 1840.

calumnies. The journal of the Duke has been published, and though up to the hour of his affliction there is a regular entry of each day's occurrences, a whole month appears in blank from the Marquess's accident, which only proved fatal at the end of above a fortnight. Horace Walpole, who writes at the time and was no careless collector of scandal, describes him as "a man of inflexible honesty and love for his country;" vindicates him from all suspicion of parsimony; declares that if he loved money it was only "in order to use it sensibly and with kindness to others;" and says not a word to countenance the imputation of his showing an unfeeling nature.* Another witness of greater fame, no less than David Hume, then Under Secretary of State, bears a more direct testimony to the passage in question of the Duke's life. Writing to Madame de Barbantane, he says that "no one at first believed he would have survived the loss;" and in a letter written between three and four months later to Madame de Boufflers, he says, it was fortunate for the Duke that the calumny came upon him "when public business gave his friends an opportunity of making him take a part to distract his attention, but that he has not yet recovered

* In a new publication since this was printed, one letter of Walpole represents the Duke as almost killed by the shock, and only saved by his body breaking out in boils: a subsequent letter treats his attendance in Parliament as unfeeling. But the former passage is fact; the latter is surmise.

the shock." He adds that the Duchess, "to whom the world had not ascribed so great a degree of sensibility, is still inconsolable." Such testimony may well be deemed to countervail the fabrications of Junius. But Junius is read because of his style, which a corrupt taste prizes very far above its value, and the character of a just, a generous, and an amiable man is sacrificed to the morbid taste for slander steeped in epigram.*

3. The story respecting an insult offered to the King is at once refuted by naming that sovereign: it was George III. Who can for a moment believe that any man durst treat him as Junius impudently describes, partly in the foul text, partly in the fouler note? "He demanded an audience of the King; reproached him in plain terms with his duplicity, baseness, falsehood, treachery, hypocrisy, repeatedly gave him the lie, and left him in convulsions." This was in the year 1769, when George III. had nearly attained his thirtieth year. Is it necessary to say more than to express our special wonder at any credit having ever been given to a writer so shamelessly careless of the accuracy or even probability of his statements—a writer who

* The cause of truth is much indebted to the industry of Mr. Wright, the able and well-informed editor of Sir H. Cavendish's admirable debates, in bringing together these extracts from contemporary writers of reputation to refute the calumnies of Junius.

gravely tells things which no mortal can for a moment believe?*

This may at least be said for the periodical press of the present day,—that those who conduct it, and who are, many of them, careless enough of the truth, indifferent enough to the falsehoods which they propagate, and ready enough to circulate the tales they hear against those whom they are pleased to assail, nevertheless feel the necessity of preserving some colour of probability, of keeping some measure in their relations; and would dread the loss of their credit for common sense, as well as veracity, were they to print such tales as Junius possibly believed and certainly without scruple circulated.

4. That some man, said to have been intoxicated, on a race-course, insulted the Duke of Bedford, Lord Trentham (afterwards Lord Stafford), and Mr. Rigby, is very possible. It was the outrage of a Jacobite mob in 1746,† enraged at their recent failure, and the parties were tried for the riot. That the chief assailant was of a description which

* He used strong and honest language in remonstrating with the King, but never anything approaching to the violence and insult described by Junius.

† The Duke was staying on a visit at Lord Trentham's, and the Gower family had just left the Pretender's party, to so great indignation of the Jacobites, that Dr. Johnson names them to exemplify the word *renegade* in the first edition of his Dictionary. The scuffle was plainly directed, by the Jacobite mob, against the party coming to the race-course from Trentham, and the Duke chanced to be one.

made any personal revenge wholly out of the question has never been doubted. The same accident might have happened to the Duke of Marlborough or Marshal Turenne. Who but a slanderer of the basest order would ever have even made an allusion to such a matter?

It is hardly necessary to add anything in illustration of the utter indifference to all consideration of truth or falsehood which formed part of this writer's nature. But a singular instance of this remains, as it were, on record, and it shows so mean a disposition that we may, with some benefit, contemplate it. That anonymous writers will make assertions which they never would venture upon were their persons known, is a position so highly probable that we require little evidence to make us believe it. But their whole conduct, while skulking behind a veil, proves it. We have not often, however, such a demonstration of this truth as Junius has furnished. He had written a letter in answer to some one pretending to be a female and signing her name *Junia*, but since avowed to be Caleb Whitefoord. This answer is in a tone of somewhat more than gallantry : it savours of indecency ; it has more than mere levity. Whether for this reason, or because the discovery of his having been taken in to write such an amorous epistle to a man seemed likely to cover the party with inextinguishable ridicule, and, from the caprice

of the public, to ruin a popularity which the more grave crimes of malice and falsehood had failed to injure ; certain it is that Junius repented having written his answer, and he then scrupled not to dictate a lie which his poor publisher printed as his own assertion, knowing it to be false. “ We have some reason to suspect (says Mr. Woodfall, four days after the unfortunate letter appeared) that the letter signed ‘ Junius,’ inserted in this paper of Thursday last, was not written by the real Junius ; though we imagine it to have been sent by some one of his waggish friends, who has taken great pains to write in a manner similar to that of Junius, which observation escaped us at that time. The printer takes the liberty to hint that it will not do a second time.” —*Edit.* (iii. 218.) The substance of this falsehood, nay, almost every word of the first and chief sentence of it, was written by Junius himself, and sent to the printer in a letter containing what in all likelihood is another falsehood, namely, that “ there are people about him whom he does not wish to contradict, and who had rather see Junius in the papers ever so improperly than not at all ” (i. 199). He desires Mr. Woodfall to “ hit off something more plausible if he can, but without a positive assertion ;” intending, of course, should he ever be discovered and should not be able to fix the contradiction upon his printer, to deny that he had told the lie directly. In the history of anonymous

writings there have been few passages more mean, few reflecting more light on the consequences of a habit of anonymous slander. This complicated scene of falsehood was enacting at the very time that the letter to the Duke of Bedford was in preparation; that letter is announced in the 'Advertiser' in consequence of a note dated Sept. 15, at which time, we are told, it was "copying out." The note desiring the untruth to be inserted is dated Sept. 10th. Surely some discredit naturally rests on the unvouched assertions of a person who, while engaged in committing them to paper, is also occupied with framing elaborate falsehoods for the purpose of extricating himself from a difficulty of his own creating. Such, at least, would be the result in a case of any other description, touching any witness who came forward in his own proper person to accuse his neighbour. But there prevails a most inexplicable disposition in the public to judge nameless calumniators by different rules from those which all mankind apply to known accusers; and to make the very fact of their skulking in the dark, the very circumstance of their being unknown to all the world, a ground of giving credence to them, and a protection to them from the ordinary objections to discreditable testimony. Because they do not appear, they are supposed unassailable, whereas the inference should rather be that they have good reason for not showing themselves.

There is no characteristic more universal of such writers than their indiscriminate railing. They are, in very deed, no respecters of persons. Their hand is against every one. Obscure themselves, they habitually envy all fame. Low far beneath any honest man's level, as, they feel conscious, they must sink were the veil removed which conceals them, they delight in pulling all others down to nearly the same degradation with themselves. Nor is it envy alone that stimulates their malignant appetite. Instinctively aware of the scorn in which they are held, and sure that, were the darkness dispelled in which they lurk, all hands would be raised against them, they obey the animal impulse of fear when they indulge in a propensity to work destruction.

To these remarks Junius affords no exception. It is untrue to assert, as some have done, that he had his idols. Lord Chatham has been named, and we have seen how, more than any other statesman of his age, that venerable patriot was assailed by his foulest abuse; assaulted not indeed under the same, but another disguise. For as unmingled vituperation would pall upon the appetite, as bitters like sweets may require to be dashed and varied, even Junius found it necessary to give some relief to his pictures, and to paint some figures in a brighter hue; not to mention that contrast becomes necessary in order to blame the more effectually, or, as Sir Philip Francis in his own person used to

say, "Praise is bearable when used *in odium tertii*." Eulogy, however, thus bestowed by compulsion, was soon repented and begrudged; nor could so ungenial a soil long support so exotic a plant. If Junius could not with safety for his consistency extirpate it, he ceased to foster it, and pruned it, or let it die away; and he had always the resource of changing his mask, and then Publicola could make up by increased virulence and scurrility for the temporary laudation into which Junius had been driven or beguiled.

It is almost equally incorrect to say that Lord Camden was not attacked by Junius. He is in one place represented as "an object neither of respect nor esteem," and as having at different times held every kind of opinion and conduct (iii. 174); in another as the "invader of the constitution, after trampling the laws under his feet" (ii. 472); and, in a third, as "an apostate lawyer, weak enough to sacrifice his own character, and base enough to betray the laws of his country" (ii. 457).*

The attacks of Junius upon Lord Mansfield have been treated of in a former volume, and it has been shown how utterly void of foundation all those charges were. In fact, the whole originated in

* It appears to me that the weight of internal evidence is so strong in favour of Mr. Burke being the author of Junius, that his own positive and solemn denial alone can make us disbelieve it. (Cor. i. 275.)

the most profound ignorance of the subject which the nameless slanderer had undertaken to discuss. That his venom, however, produced some effect is undeniable. The spirit of party; the general desire to see a great man humbled; above all, the feeling which, it must be confessed, prevails in the people of this country, unfriendly to the judicial dignity, though sufficiently respectful towards the administration of justice in the abstract—all worked with the authors and disseminators of the groundless invectives, and made men not indeed suppose that Lord Mansfield was “the very worst and most dangerous man in the whole kingdom,” but that he was open to attack beyond other judges, and was no longer so invulnerable as the voice of the profession had hitherto pronounced him to be. As a proof how much progress unprosecuted slander had made in undermining this great magistrate’s reputation, at least for a moment, take the following passage in Horace Walpole’s Letters: it was written in the beginning of the session, 1770-1. “If we have nothing else to do after the holidays, we are to amuse ourselves with worrying Lord Mansfield, who, between irregularities in his court, timidity, and want of judgment, has lowered himself to be the object of hatred to many, and of contempt to every body. I do not think that he could re-establish himself if he were to fight Governor Johnstone” (*Letters to Sir H. Mann*, ii. 120).

The effects of continually assailing a judge are somewhat singular. Because it is an unquestionable position that judicial reputation ought never to be rashly attacked, and that all society have an interest in upholding it, there arises a most preposterous notion that when this rule is violated there must be some ground for the imputations cast; and thus the principle which should be the safeguard of the Bench is converted into a means of sapping its authority. Add to this, that no great judge can have long filled his place without giving offence to numerous individuals and to many members of his own profession, even although he may not have had the disposal of patronage, the most fruitful of all the sources of official unpopularity. A judge too, when assailed, is extremely helpless. He is essentially a passive character. He has no means of exhibiting whatever pugnacity he may be endowed with, even in self-defence. This, which with all generous natures would operate as his safeguard, only furnishes an additional temptation to meaner beings, and encourages them in their assaults. The result certainly is that temporary clouds generally overcast the brightest judicial reputation at some period of its course. But it is equally certain that such clouds speedily pass away; no man now thinks the worse of Lord Mansfield because of Junius.

It is not even true that the family of Lord Holland were always treated with respect, although from the certain fact of the Francisés, whom that family patronised, being at least connected with Junius, if not the real authors of the Letters, it could hardly be supposed that it would ever be the object of his assiduous abuse. But nothing can be more contemptuous than his treatment of Mr. Fox, whom he suspected, evidently against all probability, of having written an answer to one of his Letters; and while he plainly states that Lord Holland is “not invulnerable,” he throws out a dark threat to the son, and, indeed, to the whole family, to beware how they provoke him (iii. 410); signing the letter “Anti-Fox.”

The only public man of any mark whom he spares appears to be Mr. George Grenville. This exemption he certainly owed much less to his truly respectable and indeed invulnerable character, than to the circumstance of his being anything rather than a brilliant person, and to the accident of his being wholly removed from power and office, and almost from all political influence, during the last years of his honourable and useful life. But it must further be remarked, that he died long before the close of Junius’s writings. These extended to May, 1772, under various names, and under the most famous of his signatures, to the month of January

in that year ; and Mr. Grenville died in November, 1770, before more than half the career of Junius had been accomplished.

So universal was his attack.—But although the remark be trite, that he who accuses all men only convicts one, it is, after all, on the audacity of his falsehoods that the bad character of this writer, like that of all his tribe, rests, although to this his temporary influence was in great part owing. His scurrilous abuse of the Duke of Grafton and Lord North can hardly be termed mere licentious ribaldry, for truth is plainly violated when the former is called “the infamous Duke of Grafton,” one “branded with the infamy of a notorious breach of trust,” one “degraded below the condition of a man ;”—when the latter is described “as totally regardless of his own honour,” noted for “the blackness of his heart,” and a “steady perseverance in infamy ;” “long since discarding every principle of conscience ;” a man “every one action of whose life for two years has separately deserved imprisonment.” But many specific accusations were scattered abroad. We have seen the pure invention of the writer’s malice in the falsehoods deliberately told against the Duke of Bedford, especially in the fabrication respecting the Peace of Paris ; and we have seen how he grafted that untruth upon the story imported by Dr. Musgrave, and relating to other parties. That his

motive was to hit in the point which he believed was the most sensitive, is beyond all doubt. The Duke's public character mainly rested on the success of his negotiation ; and, as he was naturally tenacious of that reputation, so were the people of this country equally alive to any suspicion of pecuniary corruption in public men. Therefore it was that the species of falsehood must be coined which should meet those several demands for it. But we are not left to conjecture upon this point. Under the writer's own hand we have a history of the designs over which his heart brooded. The printer had been deterred from publishing a letter, under the signature of Vindex, by the fear of prosecution. Junius tells him that the charge contained in it is the only one to which its object has not long been callous. The intended victim was the King ; the charge was of cowardice ! " I must tell you," says Junius, " and with positive certainty, that our gracious —— is as callous as stockfish to every thing but the reproach of *cowardice*. That alone is able to set the humours afloat. After a paper of that kind he won't eat meat for a week " (i. 221). I need hardly add that the utter falsehood of such a charge was at all times of George III.'s life admitted by all parties, even in the utmost heat of factious conflict. But this writer, with the malignity of a fiend, frames his falsehood in order to assail with certainty the tender point of his victim.

And such, we may be assured, are the motives which actuate the greater number of those who drive the base trade of the concealed slanderer.

It is truly painful to reflect upon the success which attended the disreputable labours of this author, at a time when good writing was very rare in ephemeral publications, and long before the periodical press had lost its influence and respectability by the excesses into which of late years it has run. The boldness of the assaults made upon individuals, full as much as the power with which they were conducted, had the effect of overawing the public, and in many cases of silencing those against whom they operated. The very circumstance which should have impaired their force gave them, as it always does, additional impression. The "*unknown*" and the "*grand*" were, as usual, confounded. The same things which, said by any one individual, though respectable in himself, would have had but little weight, seemed to proceed from an awful and undefined power, which might be one or many, and might possess an importance that the imagination was left to expand at will. But it is still more painful to observe such men as Lord North and Mr. Burke lending themselves to support the popular delusion; the one from his wonted candour and good humour, the other from factious motives; both, in some degree, from the kind of fear which makes superstitious men sacrifice to evil spirits.

Lord North calls him "the great Boar of the Forest," and the "mighty Junius:" Mr. Burke wishes that Parliament had the benefit of "his knowledge, his firmness, his integrity." It would have been a worthier task for Lord North to bring his unblushing falsehoods to trial before a jury of his country, as the Duke of Bedford should certainly have done ; and it would have conferred more honour on Mr. Burke to have joined with all good men in reprobating the practices by which one of the foulest of libellers degraded the liberty of the press, and prepared the way for the excesses which Mr. Burke himself was fated afterwards to deplore, and the contempt into which his perspicacity did not then perceive this great safeguard of liberty was at a still later period in peril of falling.

At all events, we who now have had leisure to contemplate the period in which those great statesmen lived, and to weigh the justice of their tributes to this too celebrated writer, have the duty cast upon us of exposing his falsehoods, and of rendering a necessary, though a tardy reparation, to those characters which he unscrupulously assailed. Nor is there any duty the discharge of which brings along with it more true satisfaction. It may be humble in its execution, but its aim is lofty ; it may be feebly performed, but it is exceedingly grateful. Nor can any one rise from his labours with a more heartfelt satisfaction than he who

thinks that he has contributed to rescue merit from obloquy, and to further the most sacred of all human interests, the defeat of injustice—injustice in which they share who fear to resist it. “Sed injustitiæ genera duo sunt; unum eorum qui inferunt; alterum eorum qui ab iis, quibus infertur, si possunt, non propulsant injuriam.” (CIC. *De Off.*, I.) *

* “But of injustice there are two kinds: one, theirs who do an injury; the other, theirs who do not prevent an injury when they have the power.”

EARL CAMDEN.

AMONG the names that adorn the legal profession, there are few which stand so high as that of Camden. His reputation as a lawyer could not have gained this place for him ; even as a judge he would not have commanded such distinction, though on the Bench he greatly increased the fame which he brought from the bar ; but in the senate he had no professional superior, and his integrity for the most part spotless in all the relations of public life, with the manly firmness which he uniformly displayed in maintaining the free principles of the constitution, wholly unmixed with any leaning towards extravagant popular opinions, or any disposition to court vulgar favour, justly entitle him to the very highest place among the Judges of England.

It was a remarkable circumstance that although he entered the profession with all the advantages of elevated station, he was less successful in its pursuit, and came more slowly into its emoluments, than almost all others that can be mentioned who have raised themselves to its more eminent heights from

humble and even obscure beginnings. One can hardly name any other chief judge, except Bacon himself, who was the son of a chief justice. Lord Camden's father presided in the Court of King's Bench. He himself was called to the bar in his twenty-fourth year, and he continued to await the arrival of clients,—their “knocks at his door while the cock crew,” *—for fourteen long years; but to wait in vain. In his thirty-eighth year he was, like Lord Eldon, on the point of retiring from Westminster Hall, and had resolved to shelter himself from the frowns of fortune within the walls of his College, there to live upon his fellowship till a vacant living in the country should fall to his share. This resolution he communicated to his friend Henley, afterwards so well known first as Lord Keeper, and then as Lord Chancellor Northington, who vainly endeavoured to rally him out of a despondency for which, it must be confessed, there seemed good ground. He consented, however, at his friend's solicitation, to go once more the Western Circuit, and through his kind offices received a brief as his junior in an important cause—offices not perhaps in those days so severely reprobated as they now are by the more stern etiquette of the profession.

The leader's accidental illness threw upon Mr. Pratt the conduct of the cause; and his great elo-

* Sub galli cantum, consultor ubi ostia pulsat.—*Hor.*

quence, and his far more important qualifications of legal knowledge and practical expertness in the management of business, at once opened for him the way to a brilliant fortune. His success was now secure. After eight years of very considerable practice, though unequal to that which most other great leaders have attained, he was made at once Attorney-General; and three years after, in 1762, raised to the Bench as Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, "the pillow," according to Lord Coke, "whereon the attorney doth rest his head." In 1749, when in his forty-sixth year, he had been chosen to represent the borough of Downton, but during his short experience of the House of Commons he appears not to have gained any distinction. The rewards of parliamentary ambition were reserved to a later period of his life.

Of his forensic talents no records remain, beyond a general impression of the accuracy which he showed as a lawyer, though not of the most profound description; *par negotiis neque supra*.* The fame of his legal arguments in Westminster Hall is not of that species which at once rises to the mind on the mention of Dunning's name, or Wallace's, the admirable variety and fertility of whose juridical resources were such that "their points" are spoken of to this day, and spoken of with admiration. But he greatly excelled them both in

* Equal to business, no more.

powers as a leader at Nisi Prius ; and his eloquence was apparently of that chaste and gentle but persuasive kind which distinguished his great rival Murray, and made all the readers of Milton involuntarily apply to him the famous portraiture of Belial—

Belial, in act more graceful and humane—
A fairer person lost not heaven; he seemed
For dignity composed and high exploit.

His tongue

Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason.

But his eminently judicial qualifications shone forth conspicuously when he rose into their proper sphere. His unwearied patience, his unbroken suavity of manner, his unruffled calmness of temper, the more to be admired because it was the victory of determined resolution over a natural infirmity, his lucid clearness of comprehension and of statement, his memory singularly powerful and retentive, his great anxiety to sift each case to the very bottom, and his scrupulous, perhaps extreme, care to assign the reasons for every portion of his opinions, went far to constitute a perfect judge, inferior in value though these qualities might be to the profound learning that has marked some great magistrates, like Lord Eldon and the older lawyers ; and, perhaps, to the union of marvellous quickness with sure sagacity, for which others, like the Kenyons, and the Holroyds, and the Littledales, have been

famous. There was, however, in Lord Camden no deficiency of legal accomplishments, nor any want either of quickness or of perspicacity in the conduct of judicial business. And it must ever be remembered, that as a judge has always, or almost always, the statements and the suggestions of all parties before him, and is thus rather placed in a passive situation, those faculties of rapid perception and of deep penetration, that circumspection which no risk can escape, and that decision, at once prompt and firm, which instantly meets the exigencies of each sudden emergency, are far less essential virtues, far less useful attributes of the ermine than of the gown. It is but rarely that a judge can be taken off his guard; never in any important civil suit, unless by some accident there is an extreme overmatch of the advocate upon one side compared with his antagonist; and chiefly possible in criminal cases, disposed of by a law which lies within a narrow compass, and connected with facts generally of ordinary occurrence and easy to deal with. It would thus be extremely erroneous to underrate Lord Camden's judicial qualities, merely because there have been many more consummate masters of English jurisprudence upon the bench, and some even of more extraordinary sagacity, quickness, and penetration.

In the great qualities of sustained dignity, chaste, and therefore, not exaggerated propriety of demean-

our, absolute impartiality, and fearless declaration of his conscientious opinion, how surely soever it might expose him to the frowns of power, or the yet more galling censure of his profession, this eminent magistrate had no superior, very few equals. That profession is ever singularly jealous on such points, and particularly prone to suspect such conduct as proceeding from a love of popularity, which these learned men, having but rarely been able to taste, are extremely apt to pronounce unsavoury, citing the illustrious chancellor and philosopher, of whom they peradventure have only read the one saying, that “a popular judge is a deformed thing, and *plaudites* are fitter for players than for magistrates.” This propensity of the bar Lord Camden well knew; but he felt above all dread of its effects, conscious that he was instigated by no childish love of plebeian applause, and only acted the part of an honest man in showing by his judgments those sentiments which ever filled his breast—a sincere love of public liberty, and an entire devotion to the principles of the British constitution.

The decision of this great judge upon the question of general warrants, raised by the attempt of Lord Halifax, the Secretary of State, to search the house of Wilkes, and commit him to prison without a specification of his person or of his offence, further than stating it to be the publication

of a seditious and treasonable paper, is well known to every reader; and no less known is the marked contrast of the dignified and severe justice of the bench, and the trumpery vapouring talk of the profligate trader in mob favour, whose oppression, by illegal exercise of power, had arrayed in his defence even those who most scorned his character and distrusted his professions. It was on the ground of his arrest being a breach of his parliamentary privilege that he obtained his discharge. This cause came before Lord Camden, as did the actions brought in consequence against the Secretary of State's messengers, who had executed the general warrant, the year after the Chief Justice came upon the bench. On the *habeas corpus* he had expressed an opinion, in which his brethren concurred, that such warrants were justified by numerous precedents. But when he tried at Nisi Prius the actions for false imprisonment, in which the legality of general warrants came in question, he declared his opinion to be that they were illegal, adding these memorable words—"If the other judges, and the highest authority in this kingdom, the House of Peers, should pronounce my opinion erroneous, I submit, as will become me, and kiss the rod; but I must say, that I shall always consider it as a rod of iron for the chastisement of the people of Great Britain."

The tenour of the warrant was, "to make strict

and diligent search for the authors and printers of a certain seditious and treasonable paper, entitled No. 45 of the North Briton, and them, or any of them being so found, to apprehend and secure, together with their papers, and to bring them in safe custody to be examined, and further dealt with according to law." The special jury who tried the cause returned, after a trial of fifteen hours, a verdict for the plaintiff, with 1000*l.* damages, in entire accordance with the Chief Justice's direction.

When a new trial was moved for misdirection, his Lordship spoke these memorable words—"To enter a man's house, by virtue of a nameless warrant, in order to procure evidence, is worse than the Spanish Inquisition—a law under which no Englishman would wish to live an hour. It is a daring public attack upon the liberty of the subject, and in violation of the 29th chapter of Magna Charta (*Nullus liber homo*, &c.), which is directly pointed against that arbitrary power."*

The applause of his countrymen, that applause which Lord Mansfield so eloquently described as following great actions and not run after, was dealt out to the Chief Justice in a liberal measure. The corporations of Dublin, Bath, Exeter, Norwich,

* *Buckle v. Money*, 2 Wils. 205. The imprisonment had only been for six hours, and the treatment unexceptionable; but the Chief Justice had charged the jury on its being a violation of public liberty.

besought him to accept their freedom. London herself enrolled him among her citizens, and placed upon the walls of Guildhall his portrait, magnificently painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, with an inscription at once simple, chaste, and true: "*In honorem tanti viri Anglicæ libertatis lege assertoris.*" *

Two years only elapsed before he was raised to the peerage; and in 1766 he succeeded his early and steady friend, Lord Northington, as Chancellor. He held the great seal about four years.

If his decisions in the Court of Chancery, during that period, have never been the subject of great panegyric, they certainly have escaped all censure; and he was of too firm a mind, and, at the same time, too discreet and modest, to fall into the great error which shipwrecked the judicial fame of future equity judges, well versed in the practice of their courts. He neither, like some of his successors, so vacillated, so disliked to pronounce the opinion he had formed, as to put off the evil day of decision, and overwhelm his court with causes heard and undetermined; nor did he place, like others, his chief praise in unhesitating and promiscuous dispatch of business, directing all his efforts to suppressing the arguments which it was his duty to hear, and estimating his merit by the number, rather than the excellence, of his judgments, so as

* In honour of so eminent a man, assertor by the law of English liberty.

to draw from Sir Samuel Romilly the comparison, that he preferred the slow justice of the Chancellor to his Deputy's speedy injustice. From these opposite rocks the calm and even course of Lord Camden's administration of justice preserved him safe. And, beside obtaining the praise of having dispatched all the court's business in a manner to give the suitors and the bar satisfaction, he has left judgments on important questions of great merit. It may be enough to mention the well-known case upon Bills of Review, *Smith v. Clay*, which fixes the law of the court upon that very important question; and which he decided in an argument, tolerably well preserved in some reports, an argument combining the highest qualities of judicial eloquence. His judgment in the great case of *Duke of Northumberland v. Earl of Egremont*, after an argument of several days, also possesses rare excellence.*

In parliament, his judicial as well as political conduct may be deservedly regarded as a model. In the celebrated *Douglas* cause, his argument on moving the reversal of the Court of Session's judgment, and establishing the legitimacy of the

* Ambler, 647 and 657, contains a very abridged account of these cases. I was favoured with Sir S. Romilly's full notes of my illustrious predecessor's judgment in *Smith v. Clay*, and communicated it to the Court during the first year that I held the Great Seal.

party claiming the Duke of Douglas's large estates, possesses the greatest merit. Lord Mansfield's engaged more of the public attention at the time, chiefly because of the famous letters of Andrew Stuart, to which it gave rise, and in which he was most severely and ably attacked. But whoever reads both speeches will find it difficult to refuse the preference to the Chancellor's; although there is every reason to believe that the Chief Justice's has been very imperfectly preserved. Both are to be found in the second volume of the *Collectanea Juridica*. But Andrew Stuart treats Lord Mansfield's as never having been published fairly, and from authority; and he dares him to the publication, in terms which seem to imply an intimation that there was something not convenient to give through the press, and a suspicion that the cautious Chief Justice would not venture upon the course pointed out.* It is moreover quite certain that the printed account to which I have referred contains no mention of Andrew Stuart, hardly any reference to him, while Lord Camden's speech is filled with direct charges distinctly brought against

* "If the multiplicity of your other affairs be assigned as an excuse for avoiding to give any answer, there is yet another method which may serve to afford me satisfaction, and may possibly do justice to yourself without consuming much of your time. *It is to publish to the world your speech against me in the Douglas cause.*"—Letter iv. page 38. (The Italics are in the original.)

him; and yet the defence is entirely made as against Lord Mansfield, and no assault whatever is made upon Lord Camden. Lord Mansfield's judgment, as reported, is a wretched performance, and chiefly rests on this position, that a woman of Lady Jane Douglas's illustrious descent could not be guilty of a fraud.

I have spoken of Lord Camden's judicial conduct in the Courts of Westminster Hall, and in the House of Lords. He was, however, fully more eminent in the senate than in the forum. He brought into parliament a high professional reputation; and beside the reputation which this and his great office gave him, his talents were peculiarly suited to shine in debate. An admirable memory, ample quickness of apprehension, sufficient learning for all ordinary occasions, a clear and pleasing elocution, great command of himself, a natural vivacity which gave his manner animation without effort, rendered him one of the most impressive and pleasing speakers of his time. His conduct, too, had been uniform and consistent; he was always, whether on the Bench, or in the Council, or in Parliament, the friend of constitutional liberty, of which he steadily proved the honest but the temperate defender. He had taken a part which indicated some considerable difference with his colleagues, on the important question of American taxation; but after he had been Chancellor

between three and four years, this difference occasioned his removal from office; and then disclosures were made which, it cannot be denied, served to cast some shade over a portion at least of his official conduct. The circumstances attending this passage in Lord Camden's life are extremely instructive, as throwing light upon the principles of the times, and in this view they deserve to be more closely considered.

When upon the assembling of parliament in January, 1770, Lord Chatham moved an amendment, pledging the Lords, with all convenient speed, to take into consideration the causes of the prevailing discontents, and particularly the proceedings of the Commons touching Wilkes's election, and closed his remarkable reply by affirming that "where the law ends the tyranny begins," Lord Camden rose and declared, with a warmth unusual to him, that he had accepted the Great Seal without condition, and meant not to be trammelled by the king (then correcting his expression) —by his ministers; but he added, "I have suffered myself to be so too long. I have beheld, with silent indignation, the arbitrary measures of the minister. I have long drooped and held down my head in council, and disapproved with my looks those steps which I knew my avowed opposition could not prevent. I will do so no longer, but openly and boldly speak my sentiments." He then

supported Lord Chatham's amendment; declared that, if as a judge he should pay any respect to the vote of the Commons, he should look upon himself as a traitor to his trust and an enemy to his country; accused the ministers of causing the existing discontents; and all but in terms, certainly by implication, charged them with having formed a conspiracy against the liberties of the people. The ministers whom he thus accused had, through all the time of their measures causing the discontents, and their conspiracy against public liberty, been his colleagues, and still were his colleagues; for, strange to tell, he made this speech without having taken any step to resign the Great Seal. It is not to be wondered at that those colleagues should complain of such unexampled conduct, though they might have had themselves to thank for it; but it is singular that a month elapsed before their complaint could find a vent. On Lord Rockingham's motion for a Committee on the State of the Nation, at the beginning of February, Lord Sandwich charged the late Chancellor with duplicity in permitting the proceedings against Wilkes to proceed without remonstrance, and refusing to give any opinion respecting them. Lord Camden positively asserted, upon his honour, that he had informed the Duke of Grafton of his opinion, that those proceedings were both imprudent and illegal. The Duke admitted that he had once intimated,

but not in express terms, that he thought the measure impolitic or ill timed; but that he had never given his opinion on the vote of incapacity;—on the contrary, that whenever the subject was agitated in the cabinet he had remained silent, or retired; and Lord Weymouth confirmed the Duke's statement, adverting to one particular occasion upon which, on the bare mention of expulsion or incapacity, Lord Camden had withdrawn from the discussion. Lord Camden repeated his assertion, that he had always entertained a strong opinion against the proceedings, and had frequently expressed it; but he admitted that, finding his opinions rejected or despised, he had absented himself from a cabinet where his presence could only distract his colleagues from a course already resolved on, and which his single voice could not prevent them from pursuing. Lord Chatham asserted, that Lord Camden had frequently made the same statement to him, supporting it by cogent reasons.

Upon this very extraordinary passage various remarks arise. But first of all it is natural to observe upon the singular state of a government thus conducted. The administration of public affairs in a very critical emergency, or what in those comparatively quiet times was so regarded, appears to have been committed to men who had little or no confidence in each other; and the first minister, in point of rank, the chief law adviser

of the crown, the very head of the law, differed openly from all his colleagues upon the two great questions of the day, yet withheld his opposition to their measures, and even absented himself from their consultations as often as those matters were discussed. If anything could make this state of affairs more intolerable, and more inconsistent with the public good, it was the undoubted fact that the more pressing of the two questions, the proceeding respecting Wilkes, was entirely of a legal and constitutional nature, on which the Chancellor's opinion was the most indispensably required, and was a question intimately connected with, if not mainly arising out of, judicial proceedings over which the Chancellor had himself, while Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, presided.

The next remark which suggests itself is, that the cabinet had no great right to complain of the line taken by Lord Camden; for he plainly had given his colleagues to understand that he differed with them, and that on this account he withheld his opinion from them. They had a right to object; they were entitled to require his aid, and on his refusing it, to demand his resignation. They chose to retain him amongst them, and therefore they took him on his own terms. But the party which had a right to complain of Lord Camden had an equal right to complain of all his colleagues, and that party was the country. A cabinet

so constructed and so acting was wholly incapable of well administering the affairs of the nation, and it was the duty of his colleagues to require either his full co-operation or his retirement ; and above all it was the duty of Lord Camden to relinquish his exalted station whenever he did not choose to perform its highest duties. To remain in office while he disapproved of the government's proceedings ; to be responsible for measures on which he pronounced no opinion, but held an adverse one ; to continue a nominal minister of the crown while the most important acts were doing in his name, which he believed must involve the country in a war with her colonies, and endanger also the peace of the empire at home—acts which he regarded as hostile to the principles of the constitution and subversive of the people's most sacred rights—was surely an offence of as high a nature as ever statesman committed. If it be said that he continued responsible for those measures, the answer is, that this rather aggravates than extenuates the charge ; for he was responsible only because he in truth joined to execute them. Instead of opposing them, as was his bounden duty, he aided in giving them effect.

It is impossible to contemplate this subject without once more being struck with the very low point at which political virtue in those times was pitched. The most constitutional judge who had

up to that time ever sat upon the bench, one of the purest politicians that had ever appeared, is found to have persevered in a course of official conduct which all men in our day would regard as an enormous delinquency. Instead of his becoming the object of universal reprobation, the only censure called down upon him by the disclosure was a single attack in one debate, in which the great leader of the high constitutional party warily defended him, and his supporters joined with their applause. The spirit of party no doubt greatly contributed to this result; the joy of the opposition was buoyant over so great a shock as Lord Camden's opposition to his colleagues gave the ministry; and accordingly we find Lord Shelburne expressing a hope, that "the Great Seal would go a begging, and that no one would be found base and mean-spirited enough to accept it upon such conditions as might gratify the ministers, as soon as the present worthy Chancellor should be dismissed;" for it is none of the least strange parts of the transaction, though apparently a thing not unusual in those times, that the Chancellor's opposition to the government was offered while he remained in office; he was not dismissed till a week after he had avowed his difference with his colleagues, and charged them by implication with a conspiracy against public liberty.

Nevertheless, it must be observed, that the lower

tone of political morality and the prevalence of faction will not wholly account for the singular circumstances which we have been considering. The exclusion of the public from a view of all that passed in parliament must be taken into the account.* If instead of an occasional and surreptitious glance at the debates of their representatives and of the peers, the people had daily read a full account of these proceedings, and if the conduct of public men had been constantly subjected to the scrutiny of the nation through the press, it can nowise be doubted that the extraordinary disclosures made upon Lord Camden's quitting office would have excited universal indignation. It can as little be questioned that, had he and his colleagues been always acting under the vigilant eye of the nation at large, and accountable to it as well as to their party-adherents and party-adversaries—the men equally engaged in playing against each other the game of faction, regardless of the country—no such state of things could have existed in the cabinet as we have been contemplating, and no man could have ventured to hold

* It is hardly to be believed that as late as 1770 the *Annual Register* should not venture to do more than indistinctly and without names hint at any part of the proceedings which we have been describing. Lord Camden's statement, and Lord Sandwich's accusation of him, are not even alluded to. The Sovereign is only mentioned by the letter K., Parliament by P., and the House of Commons by H. of C.

such a course as we have seen Lord Camden, safe and uncensured, pursued.

Finally, we may draw from these particulars in his history, an inference suggested also by the Diaries recently published of his two predecessors, Lord King and Lord Cowper, that the importance of the Chancellor in former times was far inferior to that which this high functionary now enjoys. A mere lawyer may now, as formerly, hold the great seal, and may now, as then, have little of the weight which he ought, for the safety of the cabinet and the good of the country, to possess. But if any one, of statesmanlike accomplishments, is now raised to that high office, or even any one who, like Lord Eldon, had previously never given his mind to state affairs, yet possessed a capacity for bearing a part in their direction, the influence which he must enjoy knows hardly any bounds but those which his own inclination or the jealousy of his colleagues may prescribe. It was not so a century ago,—perhaps, with the exception of Lord Hardwicke, it was not so before the time of Lord Loughborough. We find Lord King speaking of Sir Robert Walpole's consulting him, and so far confiding in him as to inform him of important matters in agitation, with a complacency which plainly shows that he was very far from considering such treatment a matter of course, as with any Chancellor whatever it would assuredly be in our

times. In like manner we can have no doubt, that had the office been regarded in the same light at George the Third's accession as it was in the latter part of his reign, so eminent a person as Lord Camden when holding it, a person as well known in the political as in the legal world, and, from his former conduct, next to Lord Chatham, the peculiar favourite of the English people, could never have acted the part he did on the greatest questions of the day, or been the silent, unsupported, and impotent disapprover of the course held by his colleagues on those great questions.*

When he had once openly taken his part, there was no faltering or hesitation in his future course. During the whole of the proceedings, both before and after the American war broke out, he appeared the steady and powerful champion of the sound

* It is fit to add, however, that on his retirement some important resignations took place. The Dukes of Beaufort and Manchester, Lords Granby, Huntingdon, and Coventry resigned their household places. James Grenville gave up the office of Vice-Treasurer of Ireland, and Dunning that of Solicitor-General in this country. The Great Seal, taken from Lord Camden (for, possibly with a view to embarrass the government, he did not resign), was pressed by the King on Charles Yorke, and reluctantly accepted 17th January; he died suddenly on the 20th, as is supposed by his own hand, and as the Duke of Grafton's papers prove; and Lord Mansfield and Sir Eardley Wilmot (Chief Justice of the Common Pleas) having both refused the Great Seal, it was put in commission for a year, when Mr. Justice Bathurst at length accepted it.

opinions which were natural to his feelings and his habits of thinking. Nor did any childish fear of lowering the dignity of an Ex-chancellor, much less any mean hankering after royal favour, prevent him from bearing his part in the parliamentary struggle which for twelve years was maintained against the court. He was upon every occasion, as it were, the right arm of Lord Chatham ; and many of his speeches, even in the meagre reports of the times, impress us with a high idea of his eloquence and of his powers as a debater. His constitutional opinions had, while in the House of Commons, sometimes been pushed to the very verge of moderation even while Attorney-General. Take an example :—In the debate on American taxation, in 1766, there was a threat of proceeding against the printer of a report containing his speech, which George Grenville complained of as a breach of privilege. “ I will maintain it to my latest hour ; taxation and representation are inseparable. This position is founded on the laws of nature ; it is more ; it is itself an eternal law of nature ; for whatever is a man’s own is absolutely his own ; no man has a right to take it from him without his consent, either expressed by himself or his representative. Whoever attempts to do it attempts an injury ; whoever does it commits a robbery ; he throws down and destroys the distinction between liberty and slavery.” Here again is his doctrine of parlia-

mentary representation:—"To fix the era when the Commons began is perilous and destructive; to fix it in Edward's or Henry's reign is owing to the idle dreams of some whimsical, ill-judging antiquaries; but this is a point too important to be left to such wrong-headed people. When did the House of Commons begin? When, my Lords? It began with the constitution. There is not a blade of grass growing in the most obscure corner of this kingdom which is not, which was not ever, represented since the constitution began. There is not a blade of grass which when taxed was not taxed by consent of the proprietor."

It may easily be imagined that he was no sooner freed from the trammels of office than a spirit so congenial to that which animated Lord Chatham would burst forth. He accordingly joined him in denouncing as a violent outrage on the constitution the vote of the Commons incapacitating Wilkes from sitting in parliament, because he had been expelled after his election. This celebrated vote, the soundness of which Charles Fox, such is the force of early prejudices, maintained to his dying day, appears to have staggered even Lord Mansfield, who, when Lord Chatham moved an address to the Lords, declaring it unconstitutional, seemed through almost his whole speech to be arguing against it and in favour of the motion. He said, that he should regard himself as the greatest of

tyrants and of traitors were he to be moved by it in his judicial capacity, though he added, mysteriously, "that he had never given his opinion upon it, and should probably carry it with him to the grave. But he considered that if the Commons had passed an unjustifiable resolution, it was a matter between God and their own consciences; and that the Lords could not carry up in an address a railing accusation to the throne, thereby exciting a flame between the two Houses, not easily allayed." Lord Chatham and Lord Camden held that, all the arguments of Lord Mansfield being in favour of their amendment, his vote should have accompanied his speech; and Lord Camden was so much impregnated with his illustrious friend's sentiments, that though he would not quite go so far as to exclaim, "Let discord reign for ever," he yet declared "that to the voice of the people he would join his feeble efforts, and the louder he heard them cry, the better should he be pleased."

After Lord Chatham's death, in 1778, rather from loss of his great leader than from any infirmity of increasing age, he rarely took a part in debate. That the latter was not the cause of his inaction, we may well suppose from the great excellence of the speeches which he occasionally delivered. One of these must have possessed extraordinary merit, that on Lord Shelburne's amendment to the address, 27th of November, 1781; for it extorted from the

most niggardly dispenser of praise perhaps the only panegyric of which he was ever guilty. Lord Thurlow said, "he never had heard a more able discourse within these walls; that the premises were distinct and clear, while the deductions followed without constraint or false colouring." "In thus speaking of the noble Lord's very great abilities," said the eminently dyslogistic Chancellor, "I trust he will receive it as my real sentiments, not being at any time much disposed to travel out of the business before the House for the purpose of keeping up the trivial forms of debate, much less to pay particular personal compliments to any man."

When the disasters of the American war, more than the attacks of the opposition, had driven Lord North from the helm, Lord Camden became President of the Council in the Rockingham Administration, and quitted that office when the Coalition ministry was formed next year, having consistently remained in the cabinet of Lord Shelburne and Mr. Pitt, when the personal and factious violence of the Whigs led them to oppose the peace, and finally to overthrow the ministry that made it, by a Coalition which ruined the Whig character and influence for nearly a quarter of a century. Upon Mr. Pitt triumphantly defeating the Coalition, Lord Camden resumed his office, and kept it to his death.

Between the close of the American war and the regency in 1788, with the exception of delivering an admirable speech against Mr. Fox's India Bill, and one or two others during the same struggles, he spoke but seldom. But on the King's illness being declared to Parliament, he took the lead in all the proceedings connected with that event, Lord Thurlow being evidently little trusted by Mr. Pitt, who had discovered his intrigues with the opposition and Carlton House. Lord Camden in particular argued, and with great learning and ability, the constitutional questions which arose from time to time during the fierce controversy of that day, and he was perhaps never heard to greater advantage than in the debate on the Heir-Apparent's right, and Mr. Fox's incautious assertion of it, a doctrine which met with its most formidable adversary in the veteran champion of our popular constitution. Nor must it be forgotten that he had now reached his 75th year.

It does not appear that the lapse of four years more had either impaired his faculties or extinguished his love of liberty : for he it was who,—a leading member of the Government, in the face of the unanimous opinion of all the Judges, supported as they were in the House itself by Lord Thurlow, Lord Kenyon, and Lord Bathurst,—maintained the rights of juries in libel cases by the law of England, and carried through, in spite of a most for-

midable opposition from those law lords, the celebrated measure of Lord Erskine, which is commonly, though erroneously, called Mr. Fox's Libel Act.

Nothing can be more refreshing to the lovers of liberty, or more gratifying to those who venerate the judicial character, than to contemplate the glorious struggle for his long-cherished principles with which Lord Camden's illustrious life closed. The fire of his youth seemed to kindle in the bosom of one touching on fourscore, as he was impelled to destroy the servile and inconsistent doctrines of others, slaves to mere technical lore, but void of the sound and discriminating judgment which mainly constitutes a legal, and above all a judicial, mind. On such passages as follow, the mind fondly and reverently dwells, thankful that the pedantry of the profession had not been able to ruin so fine an understanding, or freeze so genial a current of feeling,—and hopeful that future lawyers and future judges may emulate the glory and the virtue of this great man.

“It should be imprinted,” he said, “on every juror's mind that, if a jury find a verdict of publishing, and leave the criminality to the judge, they would have to answer to God and their consciences for the punishment which by such judge may be inflicted,—be it fine, imprisonment, loss of ears, whipping, or any other disgrace.”—“I will affirm,”

added Lord Camden, "that they have the right of deciding, and that there is no power by the law of this country to prevent them from the exercise of the right if they think fit to maintain it. When they are pleased to acquit any defendant, their acquittal will stand good until the law of England shall be changed." "Give, my Lords," he exclaimed, "give to the jury or to the judge the right of trial. You must give it to one or to the other, and I think you can have no difficulty which to prefer. Place the press under the power of the jury, where it ought to be."

On a future stage of the bill, 16th May, 1792, he began a most able and energetic address to the House in terms which deeply moved all his hearers—because, he said, how unlikely it was that he should ever address them any more. After laying down the law as he conceived it certainly to be, he added, "So clear am I of this, that if it were not the law, it should be made so; for in all the catalogue of crimes there is not one so fit to be determined by a jury as libel." "With them leave it, and I have not a doubt that they will always be ready to protect the character of individuals against the pen of slander, and the government against the licentiousness of sedition."

The opinions of the judges were overruled, and the act was of purpose made declaratory and not enactive after the opposition of the law lords had

thus been defeated. The Chancellor, as the last effort to retain the law in judicial hands, asked if Lord Camden would object to a clause being inserted granting a new trial in case the court were dissatisfied with a verdict for the defendant?—"What," (exclaimed the veteran friend of freedom) "after a verdict of acquittal?" "Yes," said Lord Thurlow. "No, I thank you," was the memorable reply,—and the last words spoken in public by this great man. The bill immediately was passed.

Two years after, he descended to the grave full of years and honours, the most precious honours which a patriot can enjoy, the unabated gratitude of his countrymen, and the unbroken consciousness of having through good report and evil firmly maintained his principles and faithfully discharged his duty.

In the whole of Lord Camden's life there is no passage more remarkable or more edifying than his manly adherence to his own clear and well-considered opinion, in spite of the high professional authority by which it was impugned. There are many professional men who, after having long quitted the contentions of Westminster Hall, and been for a great portion of their lives removed from a close contact with their legal brethren, feel nervous at the idea of exposing themselves to be decried for ignorance or despised for heterodoxy, by the frowns of the legal community, adjusted to

the solemn authority and example of those set in place over them. It was the only mark of declining vigour which Lord Erskine betrayed, that in the course of the Queen's case he dreaded to come in conflict with the judges, even on some points which there is now no reason to doubt were wrongly decided, and which he accurately perceived at the time were erroneously determined.* At a more advanced age, Lord Camden retained the full vigour of his faculties, so as boldly to announce his deliberate opinion; and that it was in no degree biassed by any party leaning, or any hunting after popular applause, will appear manifest from the circumstance of the Libel Bill being passed by him in the manner we have just been contemplating during the most vehement period of the controversy upon sedition that began with the French Revolution, and in the same year in which the proclamation against seditious writings was issued, and the first prosecutions for libel instituted by the government of which Lord Camden was so conspicuous a member.†

* For example of misdecision, take the rule laid down, that no question on cross-examination can be put to a witness, the answer to which may refer to a written document, without producing the document and placing it in the witness's hands, whereby the test applied whether to his veracity or to his memory is defeated.

† It is very gratifying to me that I can mention so valuable a step towards improvement in the law of slander and libel as my learned and esteemed friend Lord Campbell has re-

In close connexion with the most remarkable passages of Lord Camden's life, was the conduct and in general the history of Wilkes. We are thus led to speak somewhat of that unprincipled adventurer, not certainly as having any place among the Statesmen of the age, but as accidentally connected with their history.

The adventures of Wilkes are well known, and his general character is no longer any matter of controversy. Indeed, it is only justice towards him to remark, that there was so little about him of hypocrisy—the “homage due from vice to virtue” being by him paid as reluctantly and as sparingly as any of his other debts—that, even while in the

cently succeeded in carrying through Parliament, with the entire concurrence of the other law lords. The bill which I brought into the Commons twice, first in 1816 and again in 1830 on the eve of my quitting that house, embraced this and also other changes in the law, which I doubt not will now soon follow, and I most cheerfully resigned the subject into my colleague's hands. The measure was matured ably and judiciously under his auspices in a committee over which he presided; and in which, beside their report recommending the bill, a valuable body of evidence and opinions was collected. It must, however, be added, that a great loss to the reform of the law is incurred by leaving out the most valuable portion of my former Bills, that which protected political or public libel to the extent of allowing evidence of the truth. The Report of the Criminal Law Commissioners on this question, and on the whole subject, is elaborate and full of interest. Our attempt to extend the act has unfortunately failed, and the law of libel is thus left exceedingly imperfect.

height of his popularity, hardly any doubt hung over his real habits and dispositions. About liberty, for which he cared little, and would willingly have sacrificed less, he made a loud and blustering outcry, which was only his way of driving a trade: but to purity of private life, even to its decencies, he certainly made no pretence; and, during the time of the mob's idolatry of his name, there never existed any belief in his good character as a man, however much his partisans might be deceived in their notion that he was unlikely to sell them. He had received a good education—was a fair classical scholar—possessed the agreeable manners of polished society—married an heiress half as old again as himself—obliged her, by his licentious habits and profligate society, to live apart from him—made an attempt, when in want of money, to extort from her the annuity he had allowed for her support—is recorded in the Term Reports of the Court of King's Bench* to have been signally defeated in this nefarious scheme—continued to associate with gentlemen of fortune far above his own—passed part of his life as a militia colonel—and fell into the embarrassed circumstances which, naturally resulting from such habits, led in their turn to the violent political courses pursued by him in order to relieve his wants. Contempo-

* 1 Burr. 452. Easter, 31 Geo. II., *Rex v. Mary Mead*.

raucous, however, with the commencement of his loud-toned patriotism, and his virulent abuse of the Court, were his attempts to obtain promotion. One of these was his application to Lord Chatham for a seat at the Board of Trade. Soon after that failure, he was defeated in his designs upon the Embassy at Constantinople, which his zeal for the liberties of the English people, and his wish to promote them in the most effectual manner, induced him to desire; and a third time he was frustrated in an attempt to make head against the corruptions of the British Court, by repairing as governor to the remote province of Canada. Lord Bute and his party had some hand in these disappointments; and to running them down his zealous efforts were now directed.

With such a history, both in public and private, there was a slender chance of figuring to any good purpose as a patriot; but he took the chance of some of those lucky hits, those windfalls, which occasionally betide that trade, in the lucrative shape of ill-judged prosecution. He fared forth upon his voyage in the well-established line of Libel, and he made a more than usually successful venture; for he was not only prosecuted and convicted in the ordinary way, but a blundering Secretary of State issued, as we have seen, a general warrant to seize his papers—was of course resisted—allowed the matter to come into court—sustained an imme-

diate defeat—and was successfully sued for damages by the victorious party. Add to this, his imprisonment for a libel, with his repeated expulsions from the House of Commons, and his finally defeating that body, and compelling them to erase the resolution from their journals—and his merits were so great, that not even the awkward concomitant of another conviction for a grossly obscene book, printed clandestinely at a private press, could countervail his political virtues. He became the prime favourite of the mob, and was even admitted by more rational patriots to have deserved well of the constitution, from the courage and skill which he had shown in fighting two severe battles, and gaining for it two important victories. The promotion which he had in vain sought in the purlieus of Whitehall awaited him in the city; he became Alderman; he became Lord Mayor; and, having obtained the lucrative civic office of Chamberlain, which placed him for life in affluent circumstances, he retired, while in the prime of life, from a political warfare, of which he had accomplished all the purposes, by reaping its most valued fruits; passed the rest of his days in the support of the government; never raised his voice for reform, or for peace, or to mitigate the hostility of our court towards the country that had afforded him shelter in his banishment; nor ever quitted the standard of the ministry when it marshalled its followers to assaults

on the constitution, compared with which all that he had ever even invented against Lord Bute sank into mere insignificance.

That the folly of the government, concurring with the excited and sulky temper of the times, originally enabled Wilkes to drive so gainful a trade in patriotism, with so small a provision of the capital generally deemed necessary for embarking in it, there can be little doubt. In any ordinary circumstances, his speculation never could have succeeded. In most of the qualities required for it, he was exceedingly deficient. Though of good manners, and even of a winning address, his personal appearance was so revolting as to be hardly human. High birth he could not boast; for his father was a respectable distiller in Clerkenwell. Of fortune he had but a moderate share, and it was all spent before he became a candidate for popular favour; and his circumstances were so notoriously desperate, that he lived for years like a mendicant on patriotic subscriptions. Those more sterling qualities of strict moral conduct, regular religious habits, temperate and prudent behaviour, sober industrious life—qualities which are generally required of public men, even if more superficial accomplishments should be dispensed with—he had absolutely nothing of; and the most flagrant violations of decency on moral as well as religious matters were committed, were known, were be-

lieved, and were overlooked by the multitude, in the person of their favourite champion, who yet had the address to turn against one of his antagonists, a clerical gentleman, some of those feelings of the English people in behalf of decorum, all of which his own life was passed in openly outraging. Of the lighter but very important accomplishments which fill so prominent a place in the patriotic character, great eloquence, and a strong and masculine style in writing, he had but little. His compositions are more pointed than powerful; his wit shines far more than his passions glow; and as a speaker, when he did speak, which was but rarely, he showed indeed some address and much presence of mind, but no force, and produced hardly any effect. Horace Walpole constantly describes him as devoid of all power of speaking. Of his readiness, an anecdote is preserved which may be worth relating. Mr. Luttrell and he were standing on the Brentford hustings, when he asked his adversary privately, whether he thought there were more fools or rogues among the multitude of Wilkites spread out before them. "I'll tell them what you say, and put an end to you," said the Colonel; but perceiving the threat gave Wilkes no alarm, he added, "Surely you don't mean to say you could stand here one hour after I did so?"—"Why," the answer was, "*you* would not be alive one instant after."—"How so?"—"I should

merely say it was a fabrication, and they would destroy you in the twinkling of an eye !”

If we are to judge of his speaking by the very few samples preserved of it, we should indeed form a very humble estimate of its merits. Constant declamation about rights, and liberties, and tyrants, and corruption, with hardly the merit of the most ordinary common-places on these hackneyed topics, seem to fill up its measure—with neither fact, nor argument, nor point, nor any thing at all happy or new in the handling of the threadbare material. But what it wanted in force it probably made up in fury ; and, as calling names is an easy work to do, the enraged multitude as easily are pleased with what suits their excited feelings, gratifying the craving which excitement produces for more stimulus. That he failed, and signally failed, whenever he was called upon to address an audience which rejects such matter, is very certain.* In Parliament he was seldom or never heard after his own case had ceased to occupy the public attention ; and nothing can be worse than his address to the Court of Common Pleas when he was discharged. The occasion, too, on which he failed was a great one, when a victory for constitutional principle had been gained perhaps by him—certainly in his per-

* “He has so little quickness, or talent for public speaking, that he would not be heard with patience.”—(*Letters to Sir H. Mann*, ii. 22.)

son. All the people of London were hanging on the lips of their leader; yet nothing could be worse or feebler than his speech, of which the burden was a topic as much out of place as possible in a court of justice, where the strict letter of the law had alone prevailed, and that topic was verily handled with miserable inefficiency. "Liberty, my lords, liberty has been the object of my life! Liberty"—and so forth. He might about as well have sung a song, or lifted his hat and given three cheers.

In his writings, especially his dedication to Lord Bute of 'Roger Mortimer,' a tragedy, his notes on Warburton, and his ironical criticism on the Speaker's reprimand to the Printers, we trace much of that power of wit and of humour which he possessed to an extraordinary degree in private society. The last of these three pieces is by far the best, though he himself greatly preferred the first. It must be allowed, however, that neither is very original; and that both might easily enough have occurred to a diligent reader of Swift, Addison, Arbuthnot, and of Bolingbroke's dedication to Walpole, under the name of D'Anvers—a very superior production in all respects to the dedication of Roger Mortimer.

Of his convivial wit no doubt can remain. Gibbon, who passed an evening with him in 1762, when both were militia officers, says, "I scarcely

ever met with a better companion; he has inexhaustible spirits, infinite wit and humour, and a great deal of knowledge;" he adds, "a thorough profligate in principle as in practice; his life stained with every vice, and his conversation full of blasphemy and indecency; these morals he glories in; for shame is a weakness he has long since surmounted." This, no doubt, is greatly exaggerated, and the historian, believing him really to confess his political profligacy, is perhaps in error also,—“He told us that in this time of public dissension he was resolved to make his fortune.” Possibly this was little more than a variety of his well-known saying to some one who was fawning on him with extreme doctrines—“I hope you don’t take me for a Wilkite.”

Of his wit and drollery some passages are preserved in society; but of these not many can with propriety be cited. We doubt if his retort to Lord Sandwich be of this description, when being asked, coarsely enough, “Whether he thought he should die by a halter or by a certain disease?” he quickly said, “That depends on whether I embrace your Lordship’s principles or your mistress.” We give this in order to contradict the French anecdote, which ascribes the *mot* to Mirabeau as a retort to Cardinal Maury, while sitting by him in the National Assembly. I heard it myself from the Duke of Norfolk, who was present when the

dialogue took place, many years before the French Revolution. His exclamation, powerfully humorous certainly, on Lord Thurlow's solemn hypocrisy in the House of Lords, is well known. When that consummate piece of cant was performed with all the solemnity which the actor's incredible air, eyebrows, voice, could lend the imprecation, "If I forget my sovereign, may my God forget me!"—Wilkes, seated on the steps of the throne, eyeing him askance with his inhuman squint and demoniac grin, muttered, "Forget you! He'll see you d——d first."

One quality remains to be added, but that a high one, and for a demagogue essential. He was a courageous man. Neither politically nor personally did he know what fear was. Into no risks for his party did he ever hesitate to rush. From no danger individually was he ever known to shrink. The meeting which he gave Secretary Martin, and which nearly cost him his life, was altogether unnecessary; he might easily have avoided it: and when a wild young Scotch officer, named Forbes, asked satisfaction for something said against his country, he met no refusal of his absurd demand; but was ordered on a distant service before he could repair to Flanders, whither Wilkes went to fight him, after the Mareschal's Court of France had interdicted a meeting in that country.

Some of the other honourable feelings which are usually found in company with bravery seem generally to have belonged to him. He was a man, apparently, of his word. In his necessities, though he submitted to eleemosynary aid for pecuniary supplies, and maltreated his wife to relieve his embarrassments, he yet had virtue enough to avoid the many disreputable expedients which have made the condition of the needy be compared to the impossibility of keeping an empty sack upright. His worst offence, and that which brings his honesty into greatest discredit, is certainly the playing a game in political virtue, or driving a commerce of patriotism, which the reader of his story is constantly struck with; and in no instance does this appear more plainly than in such attempts at pandering to the passions of the people, as his addressing a canting letter to the Lord Mayor, when he refused, as Sheriff of London, to attend the procession to St. Paul's on the occasion of the King's accession. He grounds his refusal on the preference he gives to "the real administration of justice, and his unwillingness to celebrate the accession of a prince under whose inauspicious reign the Constitution has been grossly and deliberately violated." That this was a measure to catch mob applause is proved by his sending a draft of his epistle to Junius for his opinion, and in his note, inclosing

the paper, he calls the proceeding a "manœuvre." *
 —(WOODFALL's *Junius*, i. 324.)

• I have dwelt longer upon this celebrated, rather let me say noted, person than may seem to be in proportion or keeping with a representation of the group in which he figures ; because it is wholesome

* In admitting the polished manners of Wilkes, and that he had lived much in good society, somewhat in the best, it is unnecessary to admit that his turn of mind was not in some sort vulgar—witness his letters to Junius throughout—particularly the papers wherein he describes Junius's private communications to him as "*stirring up his spirits like a kiss from Chloe*," and asks the "great unknown" to accept of—what? Books? Valuable MSS.? Interesting information? No—but tickets to the Lord Mayor's dinner—crowded dinner—and the Lady Mayoress's far less tolerable ball, with a hint "to bring his Junia, if there be one."—WOODFALL, i. 325.

When, in 1817, I stated my strong opinion in the House of Commons on Wilkes's character, and the shame that his popularity brought on the people of England for a time, Mr. Wilberforce expressed his thanks to me, and confirmed my statements. Mr. Canning, however, observed that Wilkes was by no means a singular instance of demagogues not being respectable, and added,

"He's Knight o' th' shire, and represents them all," which is an exaggerated view certainly. Sir Philip Francis, the morning after, remonstrated strongly with me, in the presence of other friends, for saying anything in disparagement of a man run down by the Court. He regarded the offence as greatly aggravated by the praise which had been given to Lord Mansfield, against whom he inveighed bitterly. The tone of his objurgation, so precisely that of Junius upon both subjects, was much remarked at the time.

to contemplate the nature, and reflect upon the fate, of one beyond all others of his day the idol of the mob, the popular favourite; one who, by the force of their applause, kept so far a footing with the better part of society as to be very little blamed, very cautiously abjured, by those most filled with disgust and with detestation of his practices. This is an addition to the chapter on the subject, already suggested by the French revolution. The men in Parliament, the members of the popular party, with perhaps the single exception of Lord Chatham, while they would have viewed with utter scorn any approaches he might make to their intimacy, nevertheless were too much afraid of losing the countenance of the multitude he ruled over to express their strongly entertained sentiments of his great demerits. They might not so far disgrace themselves as to truckle in their measures; they never certainly courted him by extending their patronage to himself or his accomplices; but they were under the powerful influence of intimidation, and were content to pass for his fellow-labourers in the Whig vineyard, and to suppress the feelings with which his conduct in public and private life filled them, rather than encounter his vengeance and risk the loss, the temporary loss, of mob applause. How base does such conduct now appear, and how noble is the contrast of Lord Chatham's manly deportment in the eyes of impartial posterity!

But the fall, the rapid and total declension, of Wilkes's fame—the utter oblivion into which his very name has passed for all purposes save the remembrance of his vices—the very ruins of his reputation no longer existing in our political history—this affords also a salutary lesson to the followers of the multitude,—those who may court the applause of the hour, and regulate their conduct towards the people, not by their own sound and conscientious opinions of what is right, but by the desire to gain fame in doing what is pleasing, and to avoid giving the displeasure that arises from telling wholesome though unpalatable truths. Never man more pandered to the appetites of the mob than Wilkes; never political pimp gave more uniform contentment to his employers. Having the moral and sturdy English, and not the voluble and versatile Irish, to deal with, he durst not do or say as he chose himself; but was compelled to follow that he might seem to lead; or at least to go two steps with his followers that he might get them to go three with him. He dared not deceive them grossly, clumsily, openly, impudently—dared not tell them opposite stories in the same breath—give them one advice to-day and the contrary to-morrow—pledge himself to a dozen things at one and the same time; then come before them with every one pledge unredeemed, and ask their voices, and ask their money too, on the credit of as many

more pledges tendered for the succeeding half year—all this with the obstinate and jealous people of England was out of the question; it could not have passed for six weeks. But he committed as great, if not as gross, frauds upon them; abused their confidence as entirely, if not so shamefully; catered for their depraved appetites in all the base dainties of sedition, and slander, and thoughtless violence, and unreasonable demands; instead of using his influence to guide their judgment, improve their taste, reclaim them from bad courses, and better their condition by providing for their instruction. The means by which he retained their attachment were disgraceful and vile. Like the hypocrite, his whole public life was a lie. The tribute which his unruly appetites kept him from paying to private morals, his dread of the mob, or his desire to use them for his selfish purposes, made him yield to public virtue; and he never appeared before the world without the mask of patriotic enthusiasm or democratic fury—he who in the recesses of Medmenham Abbey, and before many witnesses, gave the Eucharist to an ape, or prostituted the printing-press to multiply copies of a production that would dye with blushes the cheek of an impure.

It is the abuse, no doubt, of such popular courses, that we should reprobate. Popularity is far from being contemptible; it is often an honourable

acquisition; when duly earned, always a test of good done or evil resisted. But to be of a pure and genuine kind it must have one stamp—the security of one safe and certain die; it must be the popularity that follows good actions, not that which is run after. Nor can we do a greater service to the people themselves, or read a more wholesome lesson to the race, above all, of rising statesmen, than to mark how much the mock-patriot, the mob-seeker, the parasite of the giddy multitude, falls into the very worst faults for which popular men are wont the most loudly to condemn, and most heartily to despise, the courtly fawners upon princes. Flattery, indeed! obsequiousness! time-serving! What courtier of them all ever took more pains to soothe an irritable or to please a capricious prince than Wilkes to assuage the anger or gain the favour by humouring the prejudices of the mob? Falsehood, truly! intrigue! manœuvre! Where did ever titled suitor for promotion lay his plots more cunningly, or spread more wide his net, or plant more pensively in the fire those irons by which the waiters upon royal bounty forge to themselves and to their country chains, that they may also fashion the ladder they are to mount by, than the patriot of the city did to delude the multitude, whose slave he made himself, that he might be rewarded with their sweet voices, and so rise to wealth and to power? When

he penned the letter of cant about administering justice, rather than join in a procession to honour the accession of a prince whom in a private petition he covered over thick and threefold with the slime of his flattery, he called it himself a "manœuvre." When he delivered a rant about liberty before the reverend judges of the land—the speaking law of the land—he knew full well that he was not delighting those he addressed, but the mob out of doors, on whose ears the trash was to be echoed back. When he spoke a speech in Parliament of which no one heard a word, and said aside to a friend who urged the fruitlessness of the attempt at making the House listen—"Speak it I must, for it has been printed in the newspapers this half-hour"—he confessed that he was acting a false part in one place to compass a real object in another ;—as thoroughly as ever minister did when he affected by smiles to be well in his prince's good graces before the multitude, all the while knowing that he was receiving a royal rebuke. When he and one confederate in the private room of a tavern issued a declaration, beginning, "We, the people of England," and signed "by order of the meeting,"—he practised as gross a fraud upon that people as ever peer or parasite did, while affecting to pine for the prince's smiles, and to be devoted to his pleasure, in all the life they led consecrated to the furtherance of their own. It is no object of mine

to exalt courtly arts, or undervalue popular courses ; no wish have I to over-estimate the claims of aristocracy at the cost of lowering the people. Both departments of our mixed social structure demand equally our regard ; but let the claims of both be put on their proper footing. We may say, and very sincerely say, with Cicero—" Omnes boni semper nobilitati favemus, et quia utile est reipublicæ nobiles homines esse dignos majoribus suis ; et quia valet, apud nos, clarorum hominum et bene de republica meritorum memoria, etiam mortuorum."* (*Pro Sext.*) These are the uses and these the merits of the aristocratic branch of our system ; while the mean arts of the courtier only degrade the patrician character. But mean as they are, their vileness does not exceed that of the like arts practised towards the multitude ; nor is the Sovereign Prince whose ear the flatterers essay to tickle that they may deceive him for their own purposes, more entirely injured by the deception which withholds the truth, than the Sovereign People is betrayed and undone by those who, for their own vile ends, pass their lives in suppressing wholesome truth and propagating popular delusion.

* All good men ever favour nobility, both because it is for the common weal that nobles should be worthy of their ancestors, and because we cherish the memory even after their death of great men who have deserved well of the country.

A P P E N D I X.

TRANSLATIONS.

Page 30.

There is a republic—there are no republicans.

Ibid.

We *ac*complished the 10th of August without you, and we are going to make the Republic in spite of you.

Page 31.

It is necessary to fright the Royalists! Terrify them!

Ibid.

To conquer, what is wanting? Audacity! still audacity! always audacity!—and France is saved.

Page 50.

And who has been telling you that a single innocent person has perished?

Page 53.

We must make an end of this. You see plainly enough that he conspires *deafly*.

Page 77.

In the first place, he had a perfect command of words.

Pages 77, 78.

President, I beg you would tell M. Dupont not to insult me if he would remain near me.

Page 78.

I do not believe that there exists in this Assembly a man *base* enough to bargain with the Court upon an article of our constitutional code—*perfidious* enough to propose making through the Court new changes which shame will not suffer themselves to propound—*enemy*

enough to the country to attempt discrediting the constitution because it restrains their ambition or their avarice—*impudent* enough to avow in the nation's eyes that they have not sought in the Revolution the means of their own elevation and aggrandizement; for I will not regard certain writings and certain speeches, that might bear this construction, as anything but the passing explosion of spite already expiated by repentance. No! at least we shall not be so stupid nor so indifferent as to let ourselves be made the eternal sport of intrigue, in order to overthrow, one after another, all the parts of our work at the pleasure of a few ambitious men.

Page 78.

I demand that every one of you swear that he never will consent to make a compromise with the executive power upon any article of the constitution, on pain of being declared a traitor to the nation.

Page 79.

“No! we must purge the army! we must——”

“Conclude, then.”

“Yes! I am about to conclude—and against *you*!—against *you*, who, after the Revolution of the 10th of August, would fain have sent to the scaffold its authors—against *you* who have never ceased to plot the destruction of Paris—against *you* who would have saved the tyrant—against *you* who have conspired with Dumouriez—against *you* who have pursued with bitterness the same patriots whose heads Dumouriez demanded—against *you* whose criminal vengeance has provoked the same cries of indignation which you make a charge upon your victims! Well then, my conclusion is a decree of accusation against all Dumouriez's accomplices, and against all those denounced by the petitioners.”

Page 81.

No! we have not been too severe! I call to witness (or, Bear witness) the Republic, which still breathes! I call to witness (or, Bear witness) the national represen-

tation surrounded with the respect due to the representatives of a great people. They speak of our vigour, and the country reproaches us with weakness.

Page 86.

It was a cause decided, but not tried.

Ibid.

Once more, President of Assassins, wilt thou hear me ?

Page 98.

My name is Danton ; my residence will soon be in annihilation ; my name will live in the Pantheon of History.

Ibid.

Oh my well-beloved ! must I quit thee ?—Danton ! no weakness ! Lead on !

Page 110.

The companion of peace, the ally of ease, eloquence is the child of a government already well settled.

Page 113.

Hold your peace, killer of oxen !

Ibid.

Why, I have killed some that had more sense than thou.

Ibid.

Decree that he be put—

Decree that I am an ox, and thou mayest butcher me thyself.

Page 143.

In short, I am no longer able to speak, nor—nor to hold my tongue.

END OF VOL. V.

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